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**E. Zhukov**

# **Methodology of History**

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## INTRODUCTION

Academician Evgeny Zhukov (1907-1980), the eminent Soviet scholar, began his career as a historian in the early 1930s with the publication of a series of papers on the current social development and ideology of Japan. These were followed by generalising studies on the history of international relations, the break-up of the colonial system and on the regularities of the national liberation movement in the developing countries.

The theoretical problems concerning the science of history figured largely in the historian's scientific interests, especially in the last twenty-five years of his life. He was awarded the Karl Marx Gold Medal of the USSR Academy of Sciences for his distinctive contribution to the development of social sciences.

Academician Zhukov was not only an outstanding researcher. He was also an outstanding organiser of scientific work. As the head for many years of important academic centres (Director of the Pacific Ocean Institute, Deputy Director of the Institute of Oriental Studies and from 1968 onwards, Director of the Institute of World History), as well as of the USSR Academy of Sciences' Section of the Science of History, Zhukov exerted a considerable influence on the planning, organisation and content of investigations in this area. He actively contributed to such major publications as the World History (in several volumes)

and The Soviet Historical Encyclopaedia. As Chairman of the USSR National Committee of Historians he did much to strengthen international cooperation of historians studying human history.

Shortly before his death, Academician Zhukov sent to press the manuscript of his book Methodology of History. Below we publish a translation of its main sections.

In the opinion of the author, the history of science has over the past few decades accumulated a vast amount of factual material requiring generalisation. He therefore set himself the object of theoretically comprehending this material, of summing up some of the results of generalising works by Soviet historians.

The first section of the book "History as a Scientific Discipline", opens with a characteristic of the subject of the science of history. The author underlines that although the development of production and the labour activity of people are the basis and initial cause of social movement they far from exhaust its content. The historical process is much richer.

The unity of the world-wide historical process manifests itself in the general laws of social development. It would be incorrect to assume that this unity presupposes absolute coincidence of the concrete forms in which general laws manifest themselves. They do not lead to identity of this development in all cases. The historical process as a whole cannot be understood without a study of all its components in their interaction.

In particular, both the social behaviour of the popular masses of a given epoch and the choice by a historical personality of his individual social position are largely determined by the spiritual life of the epoch: the confrontation of ideas and the traditions inherited. Social consciousness and culture as a whole are therefore undoubtedly part of the subject of the science of history.

Of course, such a presentation of the question has nothing in common with the pluralistic approach when economics are treated not as the underlying basis but only as one of

the factors of the historical process. Pluralistic concepts do not contain a profound explanation of no matter what historical phenomena, since they inevitably lead to subjectivism. Authors who take such a stand arbitrarily "choose" the factors which, in their opinion, play a role in the given concrete case.

In the final analysis the empirical and the logical coincide. But only in the final analysis since world history is an extremely complex process of human development, is anything but a straight-forward one. If the logical (i.e., the general law of development) and the historical (i.e., the empirical manifestation of this development in all the complexity of individual modifications) were to fully coincide there would then be no special subject of the history of science, history and science would then coincide. But in reality history has its specific character. It is engaged in investigating the very complex, and far from concrete, ways in which the general laws of development manifest themselves, and mankind is advancing. Investigation of these variants, disclosing the reasons for the appearance and specific features and the tendencies under way (if reference is to the present day, to prognosticating development)--this is one of the important spheres of history as a science.

The development of historical thought, the new methods of research make it possible to see the new even in material repeatedly studied. The object of historical investigation is not something that has become fossilised for all time and is immutable.

In the next chapter Academician Zhukov examines the theory of knowledge of the science of history. History is made by people, but it is also written by people. On the social stand of the scholar depends a correct or incorrect understanding of the events analysed by him and, accordingly, their objective or unobjective interpretation. Historians who adhere to historical materialism and are united by a common world outlook, a common ideology and, consequently, a single methodology of historical cognition do not necessarily give identical evaluations of certain historical facts and phenomena. This is by no means a weakness or in-



sufficient "exactness" of the Marxist science of history. The author stresses that the very division of the sciences into "exact" and "inexact" is beneath criticism. The battle of opinions is evidence of the constant growth of Marxist historical thought which is impossible without a confrontation and comparison of various views, without scientific debate and argumentation.

Zhukov discusses in detail the content and interaction of the principles of the historical method and determinism, underlying the Marxist theory of knowledge, underlines the necessity of working out specific research methods (conducive to the realisation of these principles) and the role of hypotheses in the structure of historical cognition.

Zhukov's book is polemical in many respects. He critically analyses the standpoint of opponents. He devotes a special chapter "The Battle of Ideas in the Science of History" giving a retrospective picture of historical thought in the 20th century and enabling him to underscore the active, creative and optimistic character of the Marxist approach to the study of the past.

The central part of the book is devoted to a characteristic of the regularities of the historical process. The author shows that the theory of socio-economic formations is the corner-stone of the materialist understanding of history.

The successive change of socio-economic formations is a general sociological regularity. Its discovery has turned history into an objective science able not only to record or reproduce the course of social development, but also to explain it.

The concept "socio-economic formation" is a multi-dimensional one. It springs from the indivisible unity of three component elements:

- 1) the productive forces;
- 2) the relations of production corresponding to them;
- 3) the superstructures arising on their basis.

Each socio-economic formation is a very definite historical stage in mankind's advance from the lower to the

higher forms of its existence. This logical category is embodied in a diversity of forms of concrete social organism which are at the same level of historical development. The plurality of actual variants in which the same socio-economic formation can appear makes it possible to speak of it as "unity in diversity". Contradictions in this unity, and a constant internal struggle (the motive forces of the formation's development) cannot be grounds for doubting that it is a single system, that there is a close interconnection of its various components.

Zhukov stresses the inadmissibility of a dogmatic and doctrinaire approach to the history of socio-economic formations. It should be clearly realised that if there are no "chemically pure" processes in nature then all the more they are absent in society. Throughout world history we observe that simultaneously existing socio-economic formations do not coincide, are diverse in character. In all antagonistic formations the survivals of the more archaic social relations were present. History abounds in "obliterated" forms of socio-economic relations characteristic of one or another type of social organisation. Sometimes it depends on the temporary coexistence of structures--the relics of the departed socio-economic formation with more advanced relations of production, with the new, predominant structure, which represents the mode of production, determining the formation of the given society. In all cases it must be remembered that each antagonistic socio-economic formation is a living, developing organism, that passes through the natural stages of inception, growth, maturity and decline. The non-coincidence (both in time and in space) of concrete forms in which a specific formation takes shape is quite possible and natural.

The category "socio-economic formation" enables the researcher not only to establish the real content of the society he is studying and to correctly understand the direction of its development and the nature of internal conflicts. It also enable him to find the given society's place in the world historical process.

Zhukov consistently examines the possibility of applying the category "socio-economic formation" and the ability of this category to explain things at various levels of research, in particular when considering history in "chronological" or "spatial" terms.

The third section of the monograph treats of the problem of the researcher's professional skill ("The Researcher's Laboratory"). In the chapters "The Historical Fact" and "The Historical Source" Zhukov stresses the necessity of high professionalism, of mastering the form of presentation, and that they should be tied in with the world outlook of the historian.

The author concludes his work with an investigation of the numerous mutual links of the epoch and the science of history. From the viewpoint of Marxists history and contemporaneity have never been divided. On the contrary, they have always been organically fused and indivisible: in the general sense contemporaneity is the continuation of the ongoing historical process; in the particular, a knowledge of history, of its laws facilitate the conscious regulation, management of the modern advance of society.

Zhukov's study discloses the unity and continuity of the Marxist conception of human history and shows also creative character of the work of Soviet historians.

Z. Udaltsova,  
Director of the Institute  
of World History of the USSR  
Academy of Sciences,  
Corresponding Member  
of the USSR Academy of Sciences

## Section I. History as a Scientific Discipline

### THE SUBJECT OF HISTORICAL SCIENCE

History is a science which delves into the variety of forms of social development and makes it possible to understand complex paths traversed by mankind. Like every science, history cannot exist without systematising objective knowledge, without theoretical generalisation of empirical material and examination of the very essence of phenomena under study by way of disclosing the inner laws governing these phenomena.

It was only with the appearance of Marxism that mankind's past became an object of scholarly studies and has acquired reliable objective criteria and methods of research. Of course, before Marx thinkers often asked themselves whether human society develops chaotically, in a free-wheeling fashion, or according to definite laws. Does each country, people, tribe develop independently of other countries, peoples, tribes, or do they, despite all their differences, have anything in common? Many thinkers have raised such questions. Answers have been given, at times quite interesting and noteworthy.

Representatives of pre-Marxian historical schools repeatedly put forward various hypotheses in an attempt to elucidate both the behaviour of large popular masses in significant historical developments and the role of outstanding individuals.

Many prominent historians of the early 19th century realised the existence of social classes and even recognised

'the class struggle'. But no one could correctly answer the question: why did the classes emerge, what hidden springs influence people's actions and inspire them to struggle, to advance various slogans, political and social ideals?

The prominent thinker H. Saint-Simon regarded the development of knowledge as a major element of the historical process. Since the concept of the invariability of human nature was predominant before Saint-Simon, the transition to the idea of evolution, to the recognition that human ideals change was a step forward. However, he failed to explain why knowledge developed, and finally, returned to the tenet about the specific features of man's striving for perfection.

The tendency to interpret the concrete development of some or other societies by arbitrarily chosen reasons was current in pre-Marxian historical science. For example, for a long time attempts had been made to explain the specific character of the evolution of certain societies and even whole civilisations by the peculiarities of their religious views, the complexities of their hierarchical structure, the specific stability of communal and tribal relationships.

Marx was the first to provide a scientifically substantiated answer to crucial questions of the study of the past. Developing his principles of historical analysis he proceeded from previous achievements of advanced social thought. Lenin repeatedly emphasised that Marxism was not "sectarian" in character, that it was not a certain self-centred, ossified theory which emerged aside from the mainstream of the development of world civilisation. On the contrary, he pointed out, "the genius of Marx consists precisely in his having furnished answers to questions already raised by the foremost minds of mankind".<sup>1</sup>

Marxism elaborated the solution of problems which for centuries had remained without acceptable explanation. The basic features of this solution are as follows: the ways of meeting the societal man's needs and, to a great extent, the needs themselves are defined by the characteristics of the

instruments and means at his disposal and with the aid of which he exists. The totality of these instruments and means and the capability of using them constitute the concept of productive forces. The latter are of specific, salient significance in the life of mankind. Marx wrote: "Thus the social relations within which individuals produce, the social relations of production, change, are transformed, with the change and development of the material means of production, the productive forces. The relations of production in their totality constitute what are called the social relations, society, and specifically, a society at a definite stage of historical development, a society with a peculiar, distinctive character."<sup>2</sup>

The Marxist understanding of the historical process stems from the fact that with the perfection of the means and instruments of labour and the development of material production mankind, stage by stage, traverses the path from primitive to higher, more progressive forms of social being and consciousness. Marx discovered that the emergence of any social or political institution or idea may be explained only by the definite economic interests of this or that social stratum upholding particular institutions and ideas. In his opinion, "the anatomy of civil society is to be sought in political economy".<sup>3</sup>

The discovery of the materialistic conception of history, whereby the objective conditions of the production of material wealth create the basis of man's entire activity is Marx's greatest merit. This discovery laid the foundation of historical science and provided a scientific approach to the study of history, in Lenin's words, "as a single process which, with all its immense variety and contradictoriness, is governed by definite laws".<sup>4</sup> It has made it possible to scholarly analyse social development as an objective, natural-historical process.

What underlies the unity of the world-historical process, despite its diversity?

The definitive condition for the existence and development of any people, any community, as well as society as a

whole, has always been the satisfaction of basic vital requirements, first and foremost, for food, clothing and housing. One of the tasks of historical science is to elucidate how various ways of meeting these needs affect social relations and how these relations are shaped.

The study of the progressive evolution of human society, the eliciting of the regularities of the past of peoples and countries at a similar stage of social development has enabled scholars to discern significant stages in the progress of mankind corresponding to definite levels of the development of social material production. It is precisely the change of these levels which shows the most general trend of the society's forward movement.

However, being the foundation and the primary cause of social progress, the development of production and man's productive activity do not exhaust its entire content. The historical process is much richer. Engels pointed out at the end of the last century while ridiculing those pseudo-Marxists who did not like to see any other relations in society except economic: "The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure--political forms of the class struggle and its results, to wit: constitutions established by the victorious class after a successful battle, etc., juridical forms and even the reflexes of all these actual struggles in the brains of the participants, political, juristic, philosophical theories, religious views and their further development into systems of dogmas--also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their form. There is an interaction of all these elements in which, amid all the endless host of accidents (that is, of things and events whose inner interconnection is so remote or so impossible of proof that we can regard it as non-existent, as negligible), the economic movement finally asserts itself as necessary. Otherwise the application of the theory to any period of history would be easier than the solution of a simple equation of the first degree."<sup>5</sup>

Noting the primary, determinative role of economics, Engels underscored the necessity of a dialectical approach to the analysis of the historical process, and proper consideration of the interdependability of its form and content. The superstructure is by far not a passive element: it is determined by the basis and, in turn, is capable of exercising its own effect on the latter. The united march of a social movement is directed by economic causes only in the final analysis and is not absolutely straightforward. A tremendous variety of specific concrete-historical forms originate in its course. The founders of scientific communism have repeatedly elucidated this principle. Marxist historical science does not confine its task to analysing exclusively economic aspects of social life. For all the significance of this task, its solution fails to give an answer as to the causes of the emergence of any concrete forms of class struggle, and of social and ideological phenomena accelerating or hindering the society's progress.

The content of politics is predetermined by the social organisation of production, and the source of its particularly active role lies precisely in this. Receiving its pulse from economics and being dependent on it, politics, by virtue of the widest "representation" of deep-seated economic interests, often acquires a predominant position in the life of society.

The unity of the world-historical process is manifest in the most general laws governing social development. It would be wrong to regard this unity as an obligatory coincidence of concrete forms of the manifestation of general laws. Marx wrote in Capital: "This does not prevent the same economic basis--the same from the standpoint of its main conditions--due to innumerable different empirical circumstances, natural environment, racial relations, external historical influences, etc., from showing infinite variations and gradations in appearance, which can be ascertained only by analysis of the empirically given circumstances."<sup>6</sup> The laws of social development do not lead to this development being identical in every case. It is impossible

to cognise the historical process as a whole without studying the interaction of all its components.

It goes without saying that this has nothing to do with the pluralistic approach whereby economics is given the role of not the leading force but only as one of the factors in the historical process. Pluralistic conceptions do not give an in-depth explanation of any historical phenomena, since they inevitably result in subjectivism. The scholars adhering to these positions arbitrarily "choose" factors which, in their opinion, play a certain role in this particular case. They are unable to identify the regularities of social development, for they have no substantiated initial data or stable criteria for the purpose. Solidarity with pluralism inevitably leads to positivist vulgar empiricism ruling out the possibility of generalisations.

Dialectical-materialistic monism, which is opposed to pluralism, is based on the recognition of the fact that the activity of social man constitutes the main content of the historical process. The cementing element in the life of each society is the mode of production, expressing the unity of productive forces and the relations of production inherent in them. It is precisely the development of the mode of production that in the final count determines the state of society, the degree of its inner maturity and strength, and opens up the prospects and direction of its further advance. The mobility of productive forces directly affects the relations of production corresponding thereto. The two constantly interact and influence each other. Both nature and society exist in motion and never remain unchanged. Hence, a historic approach is needed to study them. It is in this sense that Marx and Engels said that they knew "only a single science, the science of history".<sup>7</sup>

The determining role of the mode of production in the historical process, the revolutionising significance of the productive forces do not at all mean that they automatically influence the development of society. The ultimate determinateness of man's activity by economic factors (i.e., economic determinism) has nothing in common with fatalism.

History is made by people striving to attain a definite goal. The essence of economic determinism consists in that the freedom of man's will is actually limited by the socio-economic and natural conditions of labour. An individual cannot overcome either the existing level of material possibilities of a given society, or the social environment he belongs to. In the final analysis, there will of necessity occur, irrespective of his will, a so-called "correction" of the previously chosen path if the latter is erroneous. Such is the way the principle of economic determinism of social development manifests itself. If the free choice of a goal and the means to attain it is based on a knowledge of reality, or at least, on an intuitive understanding of the leading trend of social development (its regularity) such a choice may be a success. In this case freedom actually becomes a realised necessity.

The problem of correlation and interaction between the necessary and the accidental in the process of historical development, as well as of the borderline between that which to be and that which is possible was elucidated by Engels: "Men make their history themselves, but not as yet with a collective will according to a collective plan or even in a definite, delimited given society. Their aspirations clash, and for that very reason all such societies are governed by necessity, the complement and form of appearance of which is accident. The necessity which here asserts itself athwart all accident is again ultimately economic necessity... The further the particular sphere which we are investigating is removed from the economic sphere and approaches that of pure abstract ideology, the more shall we find it exhibiting accidents in its development, the more will its curve run zigzag. But if you plot the average axis of the curve, you will find that this axis runs more and more nearly parallel to the axis of economic development the longer the period considered and the wider the field dealt with."<sup>8</sup>

Men can choose both the goals and definite means of attaining them. The choice is made from a wealth of possibilities. It may be correct or erroneous. If the choice

happens to be erroneous, the desired goal cannot be achieved. This factor directly influences the historical process and may entail tangible, sometimes tragic, consequences for one or another category of people. Marx wrote: "World history would indeed be very easy to make if the struggle were taken up only on condition of infallibly favourable chances. It would on the other hand be of a very mystical nature, if 'accidents' played no part. These accidents naturally form part of the general course of development and are compensated by other accidents. But acceleration and delay are very much dependent upon such 'accidents', including the 'accident' of the character of the people who first head the movement."<sup>9</sup>

The role of the individual figures prominently at a subsequent level of the problem's investigation and is largely determined by the individual's ability to take into account the objective tendencies of social development, the actual needs of society at a definite stage of its progress. The individual may greatly influence the course of history. Man's initiative is a powerful accelerator of social progress, particularly when it awakens the energy of a great mass of people and channels it for solving vital problems. "Marxism differs from all other socialist theories," Lenin pointed out, "in the remarkable way it combines complete scientific sobriety in the analysis of the objective state of affairs and the objective course of evolution with the most emphatic recognition of the importance of the revolutionary energy, revolutionary creative genius, and revolutionary initiative of the masses--and also, of course, of individuals, groups, organisations, and parties that are able to discover and achieve contact with one or another class."<sup>10</sup>

It is common knowledge that outstanding personalities in different epochs are justifiably called "great people", whose number is small but the legacy they have left behind is rather tangible. This is due, first and foremost, to the fact that these outstanding figures acted not as lone men of genius, but as the exponents of the interests and stirrers of the activity of whole classes and social groups

at such a stage of historical development when these classes or social groups hold leading positions and are the exponents of social progress.

Naturally, one cannot exclude from historical analysis individuals whose activity hindered social progress. Mankind knows the names of the personalities who have done enormous harm and are guilty of the senseless deaths of many people and the destruction of material and cultural values. It should be noted that this category of negative outstanding figures could not have gone down in history only due to their individual wishes. Their destructive activity was possible only because their personal "evil will" was realised in definite social conditions reflecting a reactionary counter-trend of social progress and the resistance to it on the part of the class forces on the way out and historically doomed. Writing about Napoleon III, Marx said that "the class struggle in France created circumstances and relationships that made it possible for a grotesque mediocrity to play a hero's part".<sup>11</sup> Hitler is among the most loathsome personalities who disgraced themselves with monstrous crimes against humanity and who deliberately planned the annihilation of whole nations and drowned the European continent in blood. However, it would be wrong to explain this solely and exclusively by the personal features of the maniacal Führer. Attempts of this kind are being made by people interested in removing the responsibility for the perpetrated crimes from the capitalist monopolies and imperialist militaristic circles which gave birth to nazism. And had there been no Hitler, there would possibly have appeared another stooge of aggressive imperialism who would have tried to advocate a misanthropic "programme" to enslave whole nations and to attain world domination.

Both the social behaviour of the masses in any particular epoch and the choice by a historical personality of its own social position are in large measure determined by the intellectual life of that epoch, the clash of ideas, and the inherited traditions. Therefore, the problems of social consciousness and culture as a whole are no doubt part of the subject of historical science.

The history of culture (spiritual culture above all) is a specific area of research into the past, an area in whose investigation, incidentally, a noticeable lag is still observable. Cultural elements not only penetrate deep into all the pores of a socio-economic system, but also hold a markedly autonomous position there. Being very closely linked with the field of social psychology, the cultural heritage is relatively slowly influenced by even the greatest social upheavals, preventing rapid restructuring measures by inertia, as it were.

However, by far not all the elements of the old, so-called traditional culture preserved from the past have a progressive part to play in the intellectual development of society. This applies, in particular, to the vestiges of religious and other idealistic ideas exerting an adverse, retarding effect on the development and strengthening of progressive world outlook, and a new psychology corresponding to the revolutionary changes which have occurred in the socio-economic sphere.

Attention to the historical and cultural processes taking place in the society is a necessary condition for its profound investigation and understanding. At the same time, one should not take oversimplified, mechanical approach to the processes of cultural development: they should not be attributable directly to changes in the political and economic spheres. For example, when analysing the literature of a definite society, one should study its "historical background". But a mere synchronisation of creative work with the indicators of the level of socio-economic development is insufficient for making well-substantiated deductions. Deep-going cultural and psychological processes defy understanding if they are only examined within narrow chronological bounds. It is necessary to study the effect of numerous contradictory factors of a given historical epoch in the conditions of which the struggle and competition of temporarily coexisting socio-economic systems is in progress. The study of the history of culture is of paramount importance for ascertaining the connection between outstanding phe-

nomena in cultural and, notably, artistic life and those complex processes modern history is replete with.

Of extreme importance is closer cooperation between historians and philosophers, economists, literary critics and jurists, which would make it possible to enhance the synthetic approach to major historical processes and phenomena.

In the final count, the historical and the logical coincide; but only in the final count, since world history is an extremely complicated and by far not straightforward path of mankind's development. If the logical (i.e., the general pattern of development) and the historical (i.e., the empirical manifestation of this pattern in the totality of its partial modifications) fully coincide, then history would not exist as a separate subject, then history and sociology would coincide. In fact, however, history has its own specific features. It examines rather complex, intricate and by far not straightforward concrete ways of manifestation of the general patterns of development, ways of mankind's forward movement.

Marx, Engels and Lenin repeatedly pointed to the abundance of variants of social development existing within the framework of general patterns. The analysis of these variants, the identification of the causes and peculiarities of their emergence and tendencies, and (as concerns the present epoch) the elaboration of development forecasts--such is one of the major spheres of history as a science.

The development of historical thought, new methods and techniques of research makes it possible to see the new even in a repeatedly scrutinised factual material. The object of historical research is not something fossil and unchanged. Archaeology has made many discoveries which have made it possible to look at long-known and seemingly well-studied monuments of culture from a different angle. Stones begin to "speak" and enable one to reproduce the picture of the remote past, sometimes with rather appreciable corrections.

In the later historical periods any object which the scholar happens to deal with is in no lesser degree subject to

unexpected metamorphoses, revealing previously unknown data on it. Most skeptical remarks, and even accusations of historical science of being biased are heard in connection with the interpretation of facts and events which in terms of time are the nearest to the historians. And this is not surprising because the most recent material the historian has to deal with is to be given precision in most cases. The source base of contemporary history is in the stage of organisation. Finally, the behaviour of people active in the contemporary scene may change providing the basis for reconsidering former assessments.

The volume and complexity of the problems facing historical science are continuously growing, which is certainly affecting the framework of the subject of historical science, a framework which never remains unchanged. The exceptional scope of this subject sets great demands of historians: they must have a good professional and general theoretical training.

#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> V.I. Lenin, Collected Works, Moscow, Vol. 19, p. 23.
- <sup>2</sup> K. Marx and F. Engels, Collected Works, Vol. 9, Moscow, 1977, p. 212.
- <sup>3</sup> K. Marx and F. Engels, Selected Works, Vol. 1, Moscow, 1969, p. 503.
- <sup>4</sup> V.I. Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 21, p. 57.
- <sup>5</sup> K. Marx and F. Engels, Selected Works, Vol. 3, Moscow, 1970, p. 487.
- <sup>6</sup> K. Marx, Capital, Vol. III, Moscow, 1971, pp. 791-792.
- <sup>7</sup> K. Marx and F. Engels, The German Ideology, Moscow, 1968, p. 28.
- <sup>8</sup> K. Marx and F. Engels, Selected Works, Vol. 3, pp. 503-504.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid., Vol. 2, Moscow, 1969, p. 421.
- <sup>10</sup> V.I. Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 13, p. 36.
- <sup>11</sup> K. Marx and F. Engels, Selected Works, Vol. 1, p. 395.

#### THE THEORY OF COGNITION OF THE HUMAN PAST

Cognition is not a passive, mirror-like reflection of objective processes and phenomena in the thought of man. Cognition is a complex process, with its subject playing an active role. "The reflection of nature in man's thought must be understood not 'lifelessly', not 'abstractly', not devoid of movement, not without contradictions, but in the eternal process of movement, the arising of contradictions and their solution."<sup>1</sup>

Lenin's theory of reflection provides the most vivid example of the application of dialectics that permeates the entire materialistic outlook. Lenin pointed out that "our sensation, our consciousness is only an image of the external world, and it is obvious that an image cannot exist without the thing imaged, and that the latter exists independently of that which images it".<sup>2</sup> No matter what form consciousness may take, it reflects reality that exists independently of it. Such an interpretation of the theory of reflection presupposes that delusions and errors, although in a distorted form, also reflect objective reality. The subjective aspect does not change the premise that "cognition is the eternal, endless approximation of thought to the object".<sup>3</sup> Historical cognition is no exception. The comprehension of history is a process composed of a sum of the individual approaches of historians to the given concrete material.

Any subjective opinion of a historian is based on that



material and is its specific reflection. "The epistemological concept of reflection implies that the essence of consciousness (and knowledge) is engendered not by consciousness itself, but stems from that which is comprehended, cognised, forms the subject of investigation. Even when the subject of cognition is cognition itself, the concept of reflection retains its meaning, inasmuch as knowledge as an object of investigation exists independently of investigation. The fact that the given object is a reflection of the outer world in consciousness changes nothing essentially, because the reflection of the outer world in consciousness is a process determined by objective laws... Cognition is a specific form of reflection, since not every type of reflection of the outer world by a living being (including man) is cognition."<sup>4</sup>

The specificity of cognition as a form of reflection is manifested in the active position of the subject of cognition.

History is both made and written by people. The correct or erroneous, objective or subjective, interpretation of the events analysed depends on the civic position of the scholar. Even if correctly evaluating some or other facts, phenomena and processes, he presents them in the light of his individual consciousness. Lenin pointed out that "man's consciousness not only reflects the objective world, but creates it... There is a difference between the subjective and objective, but it, too, has its limits".<sup>5</sup> Consciousness does not create objective reality. In this case Lenin only emphasised the creative role of the subject of investigation in the process of cognition. He repeatedly explained it.

The activity of a scholar in the process of cognition is manifested, above all, in defining the task or direction of research, creating or applying theoretical prerequisites, formulating hypotheses and verifying them. Even in the process of the most elementary, initial stage of work, consisting in the registration and systematising of facts to be investigated, a scholar of history should reveal a certain degree of initiative and his social position. Inasmuch as

the process of cognition is not a mechanical one, it gives the subject of investigation the possibility of abstracting himself theoretically when he investigates empirical material. This makes for a better objective comprehension and interpretation of it.

In practical research, the cognition of a phenomenon is inseparable from the cognition of its essence. Any approach to the object of study presupposes, from the very beginning, the exposure of such aspects of it which express its very essence. The task of investigation is, first and foremost, to explain concrete historical phenomena. Too general, abstract evaluations which only pretend to explain them, should be avoided.

A question naturally arises as to the extent of the correctness of a historian's interpretation of real historical processes and phenomena. Of course, scientific cognition is distinguished by a certain degree of relativity. Lenin wrote that "dialectics--as Hegel in his time explained --contains an element of relativism, of negation, of scepticism, but is not reducible to relativism. The materialist dialectics of Marx and Engels certainly does contain relativism, but is not reducible to relativism, that is, it recognises the relativity of all our knowledge, not in the sense of denying objective truth, but in the sense that the limits of approximation of our knowledge to this truth are historically conditional."<sup>6</sup>

In scientific work the relativity of conclusions is determined, above all, by the fact that a scholar is unable to completely leave the bounds of concepts and ideas inherent in the epoch and society to which he belongs. Nevertheless, the socio-class contradictions, social progress, practical experience and the logic of research broaden the field of vision of science as a whole and the scientists and scholars creating it. Some hypotheses that used to be taken for truth, are discarded, for they prove insolvent. Instead, new concepts are advanced which better correspond to the correct understanding of the manifold properties and forms of the movement of matter. Transition process from relative

to absolute knowledge is practically infinite.

Scholars adhering to historical materialism and united by a common world outlook, common ideology and, consequently, a common methodology of historical cognition, can present different evaluations of historical facts and phenomena. This in no way proves a weakness or insufficient "exactness"<sup>7</sup> of Marxist historical science. On the contrary, this is a proof of its vitality and constant progress on the basis of the development of Marxist historical thought, which is impossible without comparing different views, without arguments and discussions.

Relativism in historical science is being overcome by scientific progress. With the emergence and consolidation of the most advanced social structures, there are more possibilities of adequately reflecting the objective historical process in scientific researches. At the same time, the relativism of scientific cognition remains, which should in no way be regarded as something detracting from its merit. The uninterrupted progress of science--both natural and social--is the law of its existence. This progress is based precisely on a constant, steady transition from an insufficient knowledge to a fuller one. However, one should not agree with the authors who claim that historical science is constantly changing in such a degree that it is necessary to constantly rewrite history, thereby influencing the entire social practice. History should not be re-written, but only complemented and interpreted, taking into account new, previously unknown sources.<sup>8</sup> It is therefore difficult to completely agree with the formula advanced by the Polish historian J. Topolski--"moderate or dialectical relativism".<sup>9</sup> The use of such a term leads to exaggerating the role of relativism, which is present in the dialectics of historical cognition as a definite, but far from decisive, factor. It should be noted that Topolski, of course, does not deny the existence of "objective history" and, consequently, the possibility of its truthful description and objective interpretation.

Both Marxist theoretical sociology--historical materialism--and the science of history study society in all its

entirety and development. But historical materialism and historical science approach one and the same subject of investigation from different standpoints. "Historical materialism analyses the inner logic, essence and general and specific laws of society's functioning and development, interpreting it as a consecutive change of socio-economic structures, that is, regards the historical process in its logical aspect. The science of history studies social progress in all multifariousness of its manifestations."<sup>10</sup>

The methodology of history is far from being reduced to recreating general philosophical concepts in the sphere of historical science. The essence of the methodology of history lies, above all, in establishing a correct approach to the study of concrete historical material. This material being multifaceted and virtually inexhaustible, the first task facing the methodology of history is to determine the principles of "organising" the material, its objective selection and interpretation. Methodology is to help "classify" direct objects of investigation and single out the most essential. A historian has to deal with rich concrete material in the course of society's development. This greatly complicates his task and "prompts" him to describe "unique" situations, processes and phenomena of the past. But this "uniqueness" can sometimes be deceptive. A researcher always comes across some particular material which, at first glance, seems to pertain only to the given concrete situation. The methodology of history fulfils its task only when it helps find and distinguish in the historical process the dialectics of the general, specific and individual.

G.V. Plekhanov formulated this premise in the following way: "At present, we must regard the development of the productive forces as the ultimate and most general cause of mankind's historical movement, and it is the development of the productive forces that determine the successive changes in the social relations of men. Parallel with this general cause, there operate specific causes, i.e., the historical situation in which the development of a given people's productive forces proceeds, and which is itself ultimately

created by the development of the same forces in other peoples, i.e., the selfsame overall cause. Finally, the influence of specific causes is augmented by the operation of particular causes, i.e., the personal traits of public figures and other 'fortuities', thanks to which events finally assume their individual features. Singular causes cannot bring about radical changes in the operation of general and specific causes, which, moreover, determine the direction and the bounds of the influence exerted by particular causes."<sup>11</sup>

Correct methodology allows a historian to overcome an approach to concrete historical material as an amorphous mass of fortuities and to reveal the inner logic of society's progress. To find the general in the historical process means to obtain a stable foundation for scientific analysis, a guarantee of genuine objectivity of historical research.

The Marxist theory of cognition is distinguished by the unity of the empirical and theoretical. However, one should make a distinction between the historical method in its broad interpretation and the concrete methods of historical research. Engels regarded this problem in the following way: "Marx' world outlook is not a doctrine but a method. It does not provide ready-made dogmas, but serves as the starting points for further investigation and a method for this investigation."<sup>12</sup> This statement emphasises the creative character of the process of research. Marxism-Leninism is profoundly alien to all and sundry forms of dogmatism and demands that the researcher be completely objective in his approach to any historical material. At the same time it provides the researcher with the dialectics of the historical method which helps find the stable and reliable "starting points" and a correct path in the labyrinth of the processes and phenomena under study. Its use requires a concrete analysis of a concrete situation and a strict account of the specific features of the time and place of these processes and phenomena. No formula, even the most correct, can serve as a simple "guide" to penetrating into the essence of the subject under research. The methodology

of history is far from being a set of abstract schemes and logical constructions existing outside the connection with a historical study. The elaboration of methodological questions cannot be a monopoly of "professional theorists". Each conscientious historian cannot but strive to theoretically comprehend and generalise the concrete material he comes across.

The revealing of contradictions in society as a source and impulse of its progress helps ascertain the degree of importance and independence of the historical process under study and determine its leading trend and qualitative aspect. Lenin emphasised that a Marxist "does not limit himself to speaking of the necessity of a process, but ascertains exactly what social-economic formation gives the process its content, exactly what class determines this necessity".<sup>13</sup> The range of problems grouped under the general concept "the methodology of history" (law-governed patterns in history, its periodisation, unity of the world historical process, the conceptual apparatus of a historian, the place and role of historical science in solving the tasks advanced by present-day realities, etc.) requires for their solution the unity of theory and practice. This means that each researcher should combine his approach based on and determined by his world-view with reliance on the objective data resulting from concrete investigations.

Attempts are being made in historiography to formulate the essence of the methodology of history in a more complicated way. For example, J.Topolski proceeds from the contention that the term "history" has three meanings, each with its own methodology. History as a "historical event" has "subject methodology". Its task is studying historical facts and the causes and laws of the historical process. History as a "research function of a historian" has "pragmatic methodology" (selection of the sphere of research, determination of the source material base, principles of historical evaluation, interpretation, etc.). Finally, history as a "result of research work", a sum of conclusions about historical events has a special, "non-pragmatic methodology" which deals with an analysis of statements and

conclusions formulated by a scholar and examines the most general regularities following from his work, and also the principles of historical narrative.<sup>14</sup> In these definitions one senses a certain underestimation of the philosophical aspects of the Marxist methodology of history. We believe it would be more correct to regard the methodology of history as a single, integral conception, irrespective of the possible aspects of its functional application.

Historicism is one of the basic tenets of the Marxist-Leninist world outlook. Its principal requirement is to consider all processes and phenomena in their development and in connection with the concrete events that engendered them. It is incompatible with the substitution of abstract schemes with the study of real processes and phenomena. For the principle of historicism "the most important thing if one is to approach this question scientifically is not to forget the underlying historical connection, to examine every question from the standpoint of how the given phenomenon arose in history and what were the principal stages in its development, and, from the standpoint of its development, to examine what it has become today".<sup>15</sup>

Marxist historicism interprets the progress of society as the consecutive change of socio-economic formations. The basic components of a socio-economic formation do not exist in isolation, as a sum of social factors and phenomena, but interact with each other, thus forming a system. The cognition of the inner laws inherent in this or that socio-economic formation is impossible if we do not approach it as a qualitatively definite, integral complex. Any changes going on within a formation and pertaining either to the basis or the superstructure, can be properly understood only in the historical interaction of its elements, in their unity.

A systems approach does not mean levelling or "equality" of all the elements of a formation. The interconnection and interaction of the elements comprising a socio-economic formation do not violate their inner hierarchy. The productive forces and production relations are the decisive, system-forming factor of its progress.

Men are not free to choose the productive forces. Nevertheless, the mystic idea about the productive forces as something suprasocial, having no connections with the concrete activity of man as a social being is alien to the materialist conception of history.

This is essential for the elaboration of an integral, systems approach to studying socio-economic formations. In recent years, a systems approach to the study of all social organisms has become quite widespread. It has become fashionable for bourgeois sociologists and historiographers to speak about "systems analysis" which is interpreted, however, from the positivist positions and has nothing in common with materialist dialectics.

Marxist historical science examines historical processes and phenomena in their development as an integral system; it resolutely rejects any one-sided, schematic approach to them. Such an approach to history is a violation of the very principle of historicism, which should underlie historical studies. Consequently, the discovery of historical laws never relieves a researcher from the need of concretely analysing a concrete situation. The very realisation of a cognised historical law can be different in different conditions. The operation of a law depends on circumstances. Combinations of similar social factors in different conditions produce completely different results. Hence, the need to use many approaches and methods in research.

The comparative-historical method is of great significance. A comparison of identical phenomena in different regions but in one and the same socio-economic formation often provides the clue to understanding of the principal factors of the historical process. Any historical phenomenon exists not in isolation, but as a component part, an element of the historical process, outside which it cannot emerge. Naturally, a historian has to deal also with an individual event or fact which happened only once and did not last long. In this case, too, its interpretation is tangible only if he takes due account of all the circumstances of time and place. Only when they are duly studied (and the comparative-historical method contributes to this) will it be possible

to ascertain the cause of a historical phenomenon and its place among other facts and events connected with it.

The statistical method is now being widely used in historical science. Statistics help us to reveal the regularities of certain processes, particularly in areas characterised by mass indices. This method makes it possible to ascertain the dynamics of social and economic progress and judge about its ultimate determination. But the decisive condition of its use in any historical research is the absence of any bias in both selecting statistical indices and their grouping. A researcher should always critically assess the statistical material he comes across. For instance, it is known that the data of official population censuses made public in many countries cannot be regarded as a completely reliable historical source, inasmuch as they often do not contain indices showing social differentiation, and have artificially mixed-up figures of the dynamics of wages, prices, etc.

In recent years the statistical method has considerably yielded to the mathematicisation of history. Mathematical methods command the use of statistical material, just like any other material subject to formalisation. The experience of employing computers in historical research has already been known for some time, and there is no doubt that it will be perfected. Works by I.Kovalchenko, V.Ustinov and others show that mathematical methods are applicable to research in a number of problems of history, archaeology and source studies. The idea has been confirmed about the possibility of formalising the basic classification concepts of archaeological sources on the basis of the application of the theory of sets and mathematical logic. The isolation of formal indications makes it possible to establish uniform and simple classifications of subjects and archaeological types. The study of historical sources, notably texts, with the help of cybernetics, seems quite promising.

The use of the theory of information is of definite significance for historical science (and for other sciences, for that matter). The amount of materials of various kind

(sources and literature) to be used by scholars is steadily increasing. And difficulties are piling up as far as both the collecting and processing of this material are concerned. The need arises to find accessible and expedient methods of utilising computers for historical science. Without them it is well-nigh impossible to find and examine within a reasonable time all variants of the interconnection and interdependence of the phenomena under comparison. Nevertheless, machines cannot play an independent role. The information extracted from materials should be coded in the machine language. This requires special training of a historian and his cooperation with a mathematician. The importance of the application of mathematical methods in historical science notwithstanding, they will always remain an auxiliary means in historians' work. Even a considerable amount of material subject to formalisation does not alter the fact that the application of mathematics cannot become the principal method in historical research.

I.Kovalchenko justly notes that mathematical methods can be used only within strictly limited bounds. "The broadest application of mathematical methods in any fields of knowledge does not create any new science by itself ('mathematical history', in this case), neither does it replace other methods of investigation, as some people tend to believe. Mathematical methods allow a researcher to obtain some quantitative characteristics of the indications under investigation, but they do not explain anything themselves."<sup>16</sup>

The methods used in historical research cannot be reduced to a sum total of definite rules. But regardless of whether the logical or concrete-historical approach predominated, they are always of a comprehensive, integral character and have a common trend. In all cases their main task is the inner organisation and systematisation of the material under study. This functional task has a special significance. Its solution is only possible on the basis of a synthesis of the scientific theory chosen by a researcher (and also his initial knowledge) and the new data contained in the empirical material being studied.

The so-called auxiliary disciplines (palaeography, numismatics, sphragistics, heraldry, etc.) play an important role in historical research. The development of these disciplines ensures a high level of source analysis. The variety of methods employed in historical research largely depends on their being a result of the development of several sciences and borrowed from their practice in most diverse combinations.

In such special fields of historical science as archaeology, methods have become widespread that are borrowed from natural science (for example,  $C_{14}$  analysis). But in all cases the methods employed in concrete investigations do not replace the need for theoretical comprehension of material, which presupposes the corresponding level of scientific abstraction, i.e., that which comprises the basis of methodology.

Naturally, methodology should not be confused with methods. Methodology presupposes theoretical comprehension of material. Whereas methods mean a sum total of ways and technical means employed by the researcher. Of course, the methods of Marxist historical science cannot but be connected with methodology and subordinated to it. But they vary, depending on the concrete object of investigation.

A historian and historical science itself are inevitably faced with questions which are sometimes difficult to answer definitely, due to the insufficient amount of objective material. More often than not, it depends on the lack or incompleteness of sources, or, sometimes, on controversial data related to the given subject. In that case a researcher has to advance a hypothetical solution of the problem posed. Historical hypothesis is a necessary component of research. Hypothesis is a temporary, conditional, conjectural solution of the problem. Hypothesis is subjected to a thorough checking and is either rejected or becomes a quite definite, well-founded solution, i.e., ceases to be a hypothesis. In this context it represents an essential auxiliary "working" aspect in the process of historical research, performing the function of scaffolding, as it were, during the

erection of a new building. As construction work proceeds successfully and the necessary material is properly used, the need in auxiliary structures passes.

However, one cannot exclude the possibility of historians being unable for quite a long time to prove the validity or groundlessness of hypothetical solutions of the problem suggested by researchers. The possibility of the trustworthiness of the given solution is retained. Recognition of such a probability (or possibility) should necessarily be stipulated in an appropriate way by the researcher. In any science, including historical science, ways are never closed to revealing new, previously unknown objective data and sources which can allow, at any time in the future, to clarify and substantiate the existing hypotheses, and sometimes, to advance new ones. They reflect the general concept of a historian. What is required is not only a thorough verification of the trustworthiness of the evaluations ("theories") expressed, but also a proper comprehension of the initial ideological positions of their authors.

In selecting historical material and advancing hypotheses of its possible interpretation, a historian utilises the data and methods accumulated by science. There is bound to be a priori aspect in his investigation.

There should be no absolutising either the inductive or deductive approach to material. Both of them can be used, to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the character of the material on which the researcher is working. The deductive method is "invisibly" present already in the researcher's initial approach to the source, inasmuch as any initial position presupposes a preliminary hypothetical assessment of the given source, while the hypothesis itself is a result of the researcher's general knowledge, outside the source, and his general concepts. On the other hand, the investigation of a concrete source necessarily leads the historian to conclusions that require an inductive approach.

A scholar studying the past constantly has to investigate the causes of the phenomena under review. Solution of this task requires at first ascertaining all the inner and

outer connections and dependences of the given phenomenon. Without establishing the causes of historical events and phenomena it would be impossible to come to comprehend the laws of social development at a higher level of abstraction. Any event, even a fortuitous one, as it might seem, cannot but have a cause. In assessing a historical process or phenomenon, circumstances are usually considered "fortuitous" if they do not have a direct impact on the essence of the given process or phenomenon and do not belong to the causes conditioning them. But these "fortuities" do not emerge all by themselves; they are engendered by a number of reasons which may not be connected with the object under investigation. They can be, and are, manifestations of quite definite laws which operate independently of the laws underlying the process or phenomenon under study. However, since "fortuities" do exist, a historian should not ignore them in his work. The "fortuitous" does not explain the essence of the principal object of historical analysis, but it should necessarily be taken into consideration in investigating outer connections and circumstances which exert at least some, indirect influence on the process being studied. From this follows that both the "necessary" and the "fortuitous" should be the subject of historical analysis.

Concrete research work plays the key role in the development of Marxist historical science. The constant raising of the theoretical level of investigations is an indispensable condition of this development. This calls for an improvement of a dialectical-materialist approach to the material under investigation. Methodology should not be regarded as something "external" with regard to a historian's work. The enrichment of concrete materials should contribute to a higher theoretical level, i.e., better methodological foundations of historical research.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> V.I.Lenin, Collected Works, Moscow, Vol.38, p.195.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., Vol.14, p.69.

- <sup>3</sup> Ibid., Vol.38, p.195.
- <sup>4</sup> Th.I.Oizerman, Main Philosophical Trends, Moscow, 1971, pp.109-110 (in Russian).
- <sup>5</sup> V.I.Lenin, Collected Works, Vol.38, pp.212, 98.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid., Vol.14, p.137.
- <sup>7</sup> Incidentally, the very division of sciences into "exact" and "inexact" does not withstand any serious criticism.
- <sup>8</sup> The past 30 or 40 years have witnessed such essential changes in the natural sciences that it is practically impossible to use literature on these disciplines, which was written some 20 or 30 years ago.
- <sup>9</sup> J.Topolski, Swiat bez historii, Warsaw, 1972, pp.196-198.
- <sup>10</sup> L.F.Ilyichev, Philosophy and Scientific Progress, Moscow, 1977, p.163 (in Russian).
- <sup>11</sup> G.V.Plekhanov, Selected Philosophical Works, Vol.2, Moscow, 1976, pp.313-314.
- <sup>12</sup> K.Marx, F.Engels, Werke, Vol.39, p.428.
- <sup>13</sup> V.I.Lenin, Collected Works, Vol.1, p.401.
- <sup>14</sup> J.Topolski, Metodologia historii, Warsaw, 1973, p.428.
- <sup>15</sup> V.I.Lenin, Collected Works, Vol.29, p.473.
- <sup>16</sup> I.D.Kovalchenko, "On Applying Mathematical-Statistical Methods in Historical Research", The Source Studies: Theoretical and Methodological Problems, Moscow, 1969, pp.118-119 (in Russian); J.Kahk, I.Kovalchenko, "Quantitative Methods in Historical Research", Social Sciences, No.2, 1976.

### PARTISANSHIP IN THE BATTLE OF IDEAS IN HISTORICAL SCIENCE

The historian cannot abstract himself from his social milieu and its dominant views. Consequently, one or another attitude to historical processes and phenomena, i.e., their assessment, even regardless of the author's will, will always be present in any historical study. The Marxist-Leninist understanding of the partisanship of science holds that there is a definite dependence between the socio-political class position of the historian and the degree of objectivity, approximation to the truth, in his appraisal of the historical process.

As every social science, history cannot be indifferent or neutral to the subject of its analysis. This applies to every stage of research, even the assembly of factual data. The science of society presupposes research conducted from definite class positions.

Can a class position be objective? Yes, it can, if the assessment of historical processes, phenomena and events is made by the more progressive social forces, by the class that is the vehicle and motive force of social progress. "Neutrality" in relation to social phenomena, i.e., objectivism, inevitably leads to renouncement of a critical attitude to these phenomena, to their apologia and, consequently, to retreat from objectivity.

Marxism discovered the social conditioning of human

consciousness. And in this lie the roots of "partisanship in science", i.e., the dependence of historical cognition and its related judgements on the class ideological position of the historian. Partisanship should not be judged in terms of the personality of the given scholar and his purely individual qualities, traits, origins, psychology, etc. We must proceed from an analysis of the objective interests of the social milieu to which the historian belongs. One must not imagine, Marx wrote, "that the democratic representatives [reference is to bourgeois democracy — E.Zh.] are indeed all shopkeepers or enthusiastic champions of shopkeepers. According to their education and their individual position they may be as far apart as heaven from earth. What makes them representatives of the petty bourgeoisie is the fact that in their minds they do not get beyond the limits which the latter do not get beyond in life, that they are consequently driven, theoretically, to the same problems and solutions to which material interest and social position drive the latter practically."<sup>1</sup>

In upholding partisanship in science, Lenin trenchantly criticised those who artificially counterpose objectivity in scientific research to the class sympathies and antipathies of the researcher. He wrote: "If a certain doctrine demands of everyone taking part in public life an inexorably objective analysis of realities and of the relationships between the various classes arising from these realities, by what miracle can the conclusion be drawn from this that they must not sympathise, are 'not entitled' to sympathise with one or another class? It is ridiculous, in this connection, even to talk of duty, for no living person can help taking the side of one class or another (once he has understood their interrelationships), can help rejoicing at the successes of that class and being disappointed by its failure, can help being angered by those who are hostile to that class, who hamper its development by disseminating backward views, and so on and so forth."<sup>2</sup> And so, partisanship in the social science is not artificially injected from without, but is organically intrinsic to the process of research inasmuch as its subject is "living man".



Objectivism, which bourgeois critics counterpose to the Marxist proposition of partisanship in science, usually turns into bourgeois partisanship. The philistine notion of the "incompatibility" of an objective analysis of reality with partisanship wholly ignores the dialectic of social development, and is premised on crude evolutionism in examining social processes. Every social phenomenon is intrinsically contradictory, composed of elements imperatively demanding that the subject of research reveal his attitude to them. Georgi Plekhanov explained that reliance on reality (without which there can be no scientific analysis) does not mean passive acceptance of or reconciliation with that reality. He wrote: "When the metaphysician hears that one who serves society must take his stand on reality, he imagines that he is being advised to make his peace with that reality. He is unaware that in every economic reality there exist contradictory elements, and that to make his peace with reality would mean making his peace with only one of its elements, namely, that which dominates for the moment. The dialectical materialists pointed, and point, to another element of reality, hostile to the first, and one in which the future is maturing."<sup>3</sup>

Lenin gave an even more clear-cut formulation of the difference between objectivism (as counterfeit objectivity) and a genuine objective, class, materialistic approach to social phenomena. In the struggle with reactionary Narodism, which operated under the false flag of objectivity in science, he explained in detail the fundamental difference between objectivity and objectivism. "The objectivist speaks of the necessity of a given historical process; the materialist gives an exact picture of the given social-economic formation and of the antagonistic relations to which it gives rise. When demonstrating the necessity for a given series of facts, the objectivist always runs the risk of becoming an apologist for these facts: the materialist discloses the class contradictions and in so doing defines his standpoint."<sup>4</sup>

Partisanship in historical science has nothing in common with vulgar subjectivism. Partisanship has, in effect, always been present in the science of history. "Practically all titans of 19th-century historical thought, far from concealing their political convictions, regarded history as a weapon of their propaganda. They were partisan historians in the direct and precise meaning of the term... Men of differing political persuasions, of differing social ideals, turned to the past in the quest for arguments to support their views, deepen their understanding of the present and gain an insight into the future."<sup>5</sup>

Partisanship in the social sciences, history in particular, has been the subject of ceaseless attacks by a wide range of ideological opponents. Some critics of Marxism subscribe to the vulgar notion that partisanship in the social (in this case historical) science means that the scholar is writing history on the explicit orders of his political party. Actually, partisanship, i.e., the socio-political orientation of one or another historical work, is determined not by the subjective position of its author, but by the objective conditions that shape his choice of ideological position and govern his creative work.

A contradiction might arise between partisanship and scientific objectivity--indeed is bound to arise--if the researcher disregards the real requirements of progressive social development, or clashes with them. Hence, partisanship of Marxist social science, reflecting as it does the views of the most progressive class of modern society, is free of all bias. It is truly objective. Engels had every reason to point out that Marxism was acquiring supporters "in every country which contains, on the one hand, proletarians and, on the other, undaunted scientific theoreticians."<sup>6</sup>

Bourgeois critics accuse the Marxists of "dogmatism", the absence of any desire to make an impartial appraisal of the facts. This is a hypocritical accusation, for it is precisely bourgeois historical science that is dominated by subjectivism. And it is precisely bourgeois historiography

that questions the very possibility of objectively interpreting historical sources. The appeal for an "impartial appraisal of the facts", is, therefore, largely demagoguery, and claims that bourgeois science is "objective" have no foundation in fact.

Bourgeois objectivism is closely related to "pure" subjectivism. Engels sarcastically remarked on the "self-complacent 'objectivity' which sees no further than its nose and precisely for that reason amounts to the most narrow-minded subjectivity even when it is shared by thousands of such subjects."<sup>7</sup>

The science of human history has always been and is an arena of ideological struggle, of conflict of progressive and reactionary views. Historiography (i.e., the history of historical science) is a political discipline that studies the development of historical thought against a wide background of philosophical ideas and social interests. This lends exceptional importance to historiographic research studying the development of science, the emergence of historical conceptions reflecting the different ideological positions of the conflicting class forces.

Soviet historiography has made undoubted progress in assessing the contribution to the science of history by a number of Soviet and foreign historians. However, our monographs, textbooks and study aids have not fully revealed many significant facts of the interaction and interinfluence of historiographic conceptions of different authors and entire schools. They are usually examined in isolation of each other and not as manifestations of the "pervading spirit" of the epoch. A.M. Sakharov has justly remarked that "since the principal factor in the process of cognition is its methodology, the development stages of science differ from each other in method of research, in principles of cognition and conceptualisation succeeding each other".<sup>8</sup>

The significant progress of Marxist historical science is internationally acknowledged. Not only in the socialist world, but also in developing and capitalist countries, the

prestige of Marxist historiography is very high. Some schools of bourgeois and reformist historiography owe their very appearance to the influence of Marxism-Leninism on scholars who, though conscious of the weakness of their own theoretical positions, are not yet prepared to abandon their idealist views. This finds particular reflection in the changing themes of historical research, more attention focused on economic history, the role of mass movements, and the history of revolutions.

At the same time, the battle of ideas in history is steadily becoming sharper, which is but an objective reflection of the confrontation of the two socio-economic systems.

Many bourgeois and revisionist historiographers claim that their ideas are innovative. Characteristically, non-Marxist idealistic theories and constructs in the philosophy of history are undergoing gradual change and are adopting to the times. Recognition or semi-recognition of individual Marxist propositions have produced a series of eclectic conceptions whose authors seek to unite the ununitable, materialist and idealistic interpretations of the past.

For a long time H. Rickert and W. Windelband were the most prominent figures among bourgeois philosophers seeking to undermine the materialist conception of history. Taking as their premise Kantian dualism, they have sought to reconcile acceptance of the alleged existence of unknowable historical facts, and the cardinal role of the historian in their interpretation and assessment.

According to Rickert, the science of history is inconceivable without value criteria. Criticising his subjectivist interpretation of axiological judgements, Plekhanov wrote: "Undoubtedly, every historian arranges his scientific material--separating the essential from the non-essential--from the viewpoint of a certain value. The whole question is: what is the nature of this value? It is quite impossible to answer this question by asserting that, in this particular case, the value concerned is in the category of cultural values. Not at all. As a man of science--and within the fra-

mework of his science--the historian considers as essential that which helps him to determine the causal connection of those events the aggregate of which constitutes the individual process of development he is studying; and as non-essential that which is irrelevant to this theme. Consequently, what is involved there is not at all category of values spoken of by Rickert."<sup>9</sup>

Max Weber's philosophical conceptions are based on Kantian views as well. In contrast to the Marxist-Leninist theory on socio-economic formations, he has advanced his own conception of artificially constructed "ideal types of society". He denies the objective character of social regularities, proposing instead these "ideal types" as a subjective surrogate for historical conceptualisation.

Unlike the Rickertians, bourgeois scientists of the positivist school work from the principle of the impermissibility of any value judgements in the study of the past, for this, they allege, dooms science to subjectivist relativism. At the same time, however, the positivists identify the facts of history with the facts of natural science, which reduces history to the level of a mere recorder of events.

On the whole the contemporary non-Marxist historiography strives to undermine the principle of objectivity of historical knowledge and to affirm the priority of the subject in historical cognition. The American historian Henry Steel Commager remarks: "It should be clear that history as what happened, over some thousands or tens of thousands of years, has no inherent philosophy. It is only in historiography that we can discover ... some philosophy. History has no philosophy, but historians do. Whatever philosophy is found in history has first been put there by some historian--or perhaps by some philosopher. When the historian purports to discover some laws or principles of history, they are laws and principles of his own making or his own discovery and application; when the philosopher reads some purpose into history, it is his own reading." This extremely subjectivist position rejects any attempt to penetrate

the essence of the historical process and understand its implications. But Commager goes further, negating the very concept of history: "There is nothing that is in fact history as there are atoms, rocks, or chemicals. These things exist in Nature; they would be there if man passed away from the scene. But history does not exist in Nature, but merely in man's imagination, and it is not there unless man is there to imagine it and formulate it. It is a sophisticated concept whereby man organizes his collective memory and imposes order and meaning on an incoherent past."<sup>10</sup> Such is the extreme, and lucidly formulated, rejection not only of scientific knowledge, but of the science of history as such.

There is any amount of pronouncements on this subject. Some exaggerate the fact that the student of the past does not have a broad experimental basis, allegedly the only guarantee of scientific objectivity. Many bourgeois scholars are inclined to "reduce" history to the level of a "pariah" far removed from modern Western sociology with its "strictly scientific" mathematicalised conclusions. We have, in short, a curious "rearrangement of concepts": the data the researcher puts into the computer is tacitly accepted as objective, "cleared" of the influence of the researcher's personality. Even bourgeois scholars have drawn attention to this "innocent trick" with the help of which the computer programmer is fully "objectivised".<sup>11</sup> These claims to strict scientific objectivity, to "non-partisanship" of sociological experimental research, should be viewed with a critical eye.

It is no accident that negation of the objective character of historical research is often justified in bourgeois science by the plea that we cannot authentically reconstruct events of the past. Many non-Marxist historians are inclined to put concrete sociology above history or, at any rate, impose the idea that "sociological methods" are superior to historical ones. But what kind of sociology have they in mind? Bourgeois historiography understands social sciences (or sociology in its general implications) not as

philosophical, ideological sciences, but as something opposed to them, something that can easily be "deideologised". In their view, the social sciences include primarily applied disciplines in which the use of mathematical methods can allow experimental verification of empiric material, but not essential analysis or formulation of ideological conclusions.

The Cypriot historian Théodore Papandopoulos, addressing the 13th International Congress of Historical Sciences in Moscow in 1970, maintained that the only link between history and the "social sciences" was that both could be the subject of quantitative investigation. And the quantitative method, in his view, is a powerful universal analytical tool. Its independent use in history has practically the same features as in anthropology: "The physical and material aspects better lend themselves to quantitative definition than the human aspect... Physical and material areas of study are best suited to quantitative treatment because of their stabilised forms and because, due to the dynamic process, they have completely withdrawn from history."<sup>12</sup>

Papandopoulos needs this conclusion only to substantiate his negative attitude to the "non-experimental" science of history. Following the example of most Western bourgeois historians, he fears the "non-objective human aspect" of research. In other words, he wants to avoid an analysis of socio-class relations. For in his opinion, "the methodology of history is not in a position decisively to extend its scientific understanding of phenomena to the historical process as a whole".<sup>13</sup>

Fear of the socio-political, class problems in historical research is the main reason why non-Marxist historiography insists so vehemently on the priority of "social" sciences, or purely quantitative methods of research, which more easily eliminate the "human aspect", i.e., the truly social aspect. This idea has been set out quite clearly by the West German historian Theodor Schieder. He contends that only the social sciences reveal the regularities of development. History can only give us a picture of individual, non-recurrent

events, but can draw no regularities from them. For inasmuch as "the process of history cannot be generalised in any of its phases", it simply represents the subjective creative act of the historian.<sup>14</sup>

No matter how near to the truth the empirical data provided by sociology come, taken in their totality--and even more so individually--they cannot explain the causes of major historical processes and phenomena. The most scrupulous sociological analysis based on a multiplicity of diverse mathematical indicators cannot fully disclose the mainsprings of social development or determine the correlation between conflicting social forces, or reveal the capability of the dominant trend to overcome or paralyse countertrends operating within society. Research based exclusively on mathematical data that can be experimentally verified cannot go beyond the study of certain local processes in their narrow, pragmatic interpretation. The claim of modern bourgeois sociology that it can replace the traditional science of history with its allegedly obsolete methods and lack of modern technological facilities, is a sheer deception.

Positivist "direct experience" turns out to be inadequate even for a satisfactory explanation of recent events. Concrete sociological methods (as interpreted by bourgeois authors), both in its external characteristics and substance, bypasses the principal action of objective regularities of social development, which are not always detectable on the surface and do not easily lend themselves to mathematical formalisation.

At the 13th International Congress of Historical Sciences in Moscow there were differences even among Western historians on the relation between history and sociology. Professor Dubuc of Canada, for instance, made a clear case against the conception formulated by T. Papandopoulos. "There is talk in the humanities," he said, "only about quantitative methods, mathematics, models, information, computers, the language of Fortran, and so on. The advantages of precise scientific terminology and precise measurements are

obvious. But to the degree in which history is now seeking to formalise everything and gain knowledge of everything as a result of the latest achievements in the social sciences, it will be put in reverse movement. History risks falling into a new positivism... Many historians have taken a painstaking examination of national bookkeeping, without fully realising the theoretical problems confronting the economists! The very word 'model' has become vogueish among historians; and in using it they do not always take into account that the economists who coined it associated it with a strict statistical analysis... For the humanities ideology is what creative imagination is for the mathematicians. Those who claim to hold aloof from ideology do not take the trouble to question the validity of their scientific research and do not acknowledge the existence within themselves of certain concepts. Such scientists are misled and are misleading others. In reality, the proposition that ideology has vanished is the most ideological proposition of all."<sup>15</sup>

The primacy of the researcher's philosophical position in the cognitive process does not signify complete negation of concrete sociological methods in examining major social processes. In fact, they can help to precise many aspects of these processes. And yet, concrete historical sociology cannot replace the whole of science of history. For it can provide only some stable indicators for prognostication of social phenomena. And these can be employed only if based on a correct understanding of the objective sociological and historical regularities operating over a long period of time.

Bourgeois authors are concentrating their attacks on the cornerstone of historical science, namely, the principle of historicism. Many representatives of bourgeois science reject the approach to social processes and phenomena as the reflection of definite historical conditions. In their view, historicism is a "loop hole" for explaining social phenomena which, they claim, do not lend themselves to a satisfactory interpretation.

A while ago bourgeois historical science abided by the principle of historicism in its limited, formal understanding. The sources of bourgeois historicism go back to the close of the 18th century and are associated with the gradual overcoming of the doctrine of natural law, based on the non-historical notion about the existence of "eternal truth" and the immutability of man. The emergence of historicism was associated, above all, with the establishment of the fundamental difference between natural and social phenomena. As distinct from the mechanical uniformity of natural phenomena, the world of man was for the first time studied as being in constant change. A long step towards establishing historicism was recognition of the thesis that man's character and actions could be understood only in their development. This trend in historical science first emerged as a reaction to the rationalistic ideas, which later proved fallacious, of the bourgeois Enlightenment. The idea of a "kingdom of reason" turned out to be a pure Utopia, a lifeless plan to reorganise society by introducing ideal legislative and constitutional norms. The conviction was proved wrong that a rational plan devised by the lawmaker could change the destinies of society which, moreover, was regarded as the sum total of individuals, as objects influenced by rational ideas.

Bourgeois historicism, which replaced speculative rationalism in interpreting and assessing social processes, signified a definite step forward in the understanding of history. In general, historicism became the distinguishing feature of 19th-century scientific thought. The use of this principle required a genetic analysis of social phenomena, concrete study of their development stages from their very origins. The tendency towards historicism was present also in the historical thinking of the Enlighteners, but was seriously weakened by the abstract-rationalistic and mechanistic methodology of the Enlightenment as a whole. As a result, whole epochs of human history, notably the Middle Ages, were bereft of positive historical content.<sup>16</sup>

However, bourgeois historicism, which found its fullest

philosophical substantiation in the conceptions of Hegel, could not serve as a basis of objective investigation of the historical process. In analysing every phenomenon in its gradual development, bourgeois historicism regarded it as something unique, as an individual phenomenon. In the opinion of H. Schleier, a GDR historian, the rational core of bourgeois historicism was its establishment of ties between the general and the particular, but with attention focused on the particular. Its absolutisation led to all historical phenomena being regarded as unique and individual. Bourgeois historicism denied the possibility of identifying objective regularities of social development, and thus of understanding the historical process as a whole.<sup>17</sup>

At the turn of the century bourgeois historicism was in a state of profound crisis: the view spread among historians that the historical process was not only unknowable, that it was but a collection of "fortuitous events".

The reactionary German historian L. Ranke, taking a long step back from Hegel, denied the unity of the world historical process, maintaining that every epoch can be understood only in itself, without relation to other epochs.<sup>18</sup>

Modern Western historiography categorically rejects the very principle of historicism, even in its limited interpretation. Thus, the American sociologist M. Mandelbaum denies the unity of the historical process, arguing that there is a multiplicity of partial "histories", and though they are connected, they cannot be scientifically studied because of the unpredictable external influences on one or another historical process. Mandelbaum capsules his theory in these words: "The human past will not be taken to have been a single developing process, nor a set of such processes going on independently of one another."<sup>19</sup>

French sociologist R. Aron says that historicism, that combination of scepticism and irrationalism, is not so much a philosophy as an excuse for the absence of a philosophy.<sup>20</sup> In his opinion, every concrete interpretation of the past is determined by the political views of the historian, his

desire to see the future in a definite light. The philosophy of history cannot eliminate this multiplicity of interpretations of the past. The underlying idea of history, he says, is neither optimism, with its faith in progress, nor pessimism. In the final analysis, mankind as a whole is history. "Man's existence is dialectical, one might even say dramatic, because man acts in a world of isolated phenomena... His quest for the truth, which constantly eludes him, leaves him only a fragmented science and formal thought."<sup>21</sup>

Soviet historiography has long maintained that the science of history examines factual data, above all, from the standpoint of their conformity with reality, i.e., from the standpoint of their truth or falseness. In this sense it differs from the so-called exact sciences.

In the past few decades bourgeois historiographers and sociologists have sought to overcome the nihilist attitude to history and give it a new interpretation. Much prominence has been given, in this context, to structuralism. It is being presented as a new, "synthetic" historical science which, we are told, has adopted many Marxist theses. Supporters of predominantly positivist views are rallying to the banner of structuralism. But their constructs, which lead towards a materialist understanding of history, require a critical assessment by Marxist historians.

Every objective historical phenomenon is multi-faceted. The historian studies its different facets without in any way challenging the existence of the whole. And though every historical fact is limited by place and time, its recurrence could lead the scholar to exaggerate its importance. Expansion of history's source base, the appearance of newly discovered materials and facts relating to a given phenomenon can always justify its examination from new positions and different standpoints.

The examination of facts or events as facets, elements or structures of a much wider historical process is theoretically possible not only in development, but also in a static state. But the "extraction" of individual structures for isolated examination presupposes a definite degree of abst-

raction from the real historical process.

The concept of social structure, as well as a method of structural analysis are part of the dialectico-materialist approach to history. A splendid example is Lenin's work, The Development of Capitalism in Russia (1899), in which there is both a quantitative and qualitative analysis, with structures examined in development and in their static state. J. Topolski rightly remarks that "to this day Lenin's book, which continued and enriched the Marxist approach, is an example of how statistics can be used to study phenomena in their development (in this case Russian capitalism). This pioneer work is often underestimated in discussing the evolution of quantitative methods in examining social structures."<sup>22</sup>

Lenin's structural analysis is not divorced from his analysis of the process as a whole. He does not regard structure as something autonomous. Lenin wrote: "What Marx and Engels called the dialectical method--as against the metaphysical--is nothing else than the scientific method in sociology, which consists in regarding society as a living organism in a state of constant development (and not as something mechanically concatenated and therefore permitting all sorts of arbitrary combinations of separate social elements), an organism the study of which requires an objective analysis of the production relations that constitute the given social formation and an investigation of its laws of functioning and development."<sup>23</sup> In this way Lenin clearly comes out against arbitrary treatment of "separate social elements". In other words, he treats society as a single organism and contrasts its comprehensive study to what has come to be known as structuralism, i.e., isolated examination of individual social elements (or structures).

Structuralism in bourgeois historiography in effect negates dynamic development and absolutises social institutions as something established for all time. The structuralists claim that their approach is the acme of objectivism and that they make no concessions whatever to subjectivism. In reality their examination of social structures is divor-

ed from the general process of history, of which these structures are but elements. That method does not allow for objective appraisals, for every social structure can be properly understood and appraised only as a facet of constantly changing and developing social relations. Making an absolute of structures is tantamount to rejecting the principle of historicism.<sup>24</sup>

It should be noted that structuralism is criticised also from extreme idealist positions. Bourgeois historians who categorically negate the regularities of the historical process and contend that it is unknowable, are inclined to reject also the very idea of identifying structures as more or less stable objective elements of social development. Structuralism is condemned, wrongly, also as a variety of the "materialist understanding of history". Existentialism, which claims to be the antipode of structuralism, is wholly based on the subjective activity of man and complete negation of all objective factors.

Both structuralism and existentialism, though they seem to be poles apart, are hostile to materialist dialectics and are incompatible with the genuine science of history.

The problem of the essence of historical cognition is not the only area of confrontation of ideas in historical science. There is an irreconcilable confrontation at every level of historical research, against every deviation from the scientific method of studying the past.

What the critics of Marxism-Leninism dislike most is that it recognises the regularities of social development. They emphasise the diversity of concrete paths of social development. And from this diversity they draw the conclusion that there is no mainstream of human development. And that conclusion is the central thesis of the dominant school of thought in contemporary bourgeois historiography. Most bourgeois historians concentrate on scrupulous and detailed study of artificially isolated fragments of the past, devoting most attention to narrow, partial questions and studiously avoiding all generalisation as both harmful and dangerous.

Scepticism is the hallmark of the crisis of bourgeois historical thought. It leads, in effect, to the division of historical science into a series of applied disciplines concerned mainly with the study of sources. Bourgeois historiography, as personified by its leading exponents, is prepared to give the reader an abundance of factual material, not infrequently substantiated and backed up by careful critical analysis of sources. But there is no generalisation, no serious conclusions enabling the reader to determine the leading trend of social development. It stands to reason that this applied only to the more conscientious bourgeois historians who, despite their fallacious theories, do not want to take up avowedly reactionary positions and refuse to become tools of anti-communism. What we have is a profound crisis of world outlook, masked by talk about a desire to avoid subjective appraisals of facts.

The most glaring example of attempts to vulgarise the materialist method of explaining the past is the exclusion of man from the process of history. History is thus reduced to the history of material values, of technology. What we have is a caricature of the Marxist thesis of the revolutionary role of change in the productive forces. The purpose of this is to remove the central, decisive element of the historical process, namely, social class relations. This has found its most apologetic expression in W. Rostow's Non-Communist Manifesto. In it, Rostow names five "stages of growth" to replace the Marxist-Leninist doctrine of socio-economic formations.<sup>25</sup>

A large group of bourgeois historians are engaged in empirical studies of economic history, without drawing the generalised conclusions formulated by Rostow. But like him they regard economic phenomena in isolation from social and class problems. This formal "concession" to Marxism by acknowledging the importance of economic factors, degenerates into a polemic with the real Marxist understanding of history, into its negation. For rejection of a class analysis is often accompanied by the invention of vague "social structures", the obvious aim being to avoid a study not only of

class antagonisms, but of the very dynamics of social development.

Some foreign historians pay homage to Marxism but accept economics only as "one of the factors" that shape the historical process. The pluralistic theory current among bourgeois historians, which assigns equal importance to different factors, including economics, is in most cases of a positivist character.

The search for alternatives to the Marxist understanding of social development has produced theories that consider human history only as the sum-total of civilisations or cultural-historical entities. At one time A. Toynbee's theories were especially popular in this context. Unlike Toynbee and other exponents of the theory of the cyclical development of society through separate unconnected or weakly connected civilisations, K. Jaspers contends that there is a universal path of history common to the whole of mankind, but he makes the reservation that not all peoples have gone through progressive development. He does not accept the theory that the starting point of global periodisation of history can be the emergence of world religions, rightly pointing out to the untenability of the chronological system based on the Christian era. In his opinion, the starting point must be the much earlier philosophical conceptions which so strongly influenced the destinies of mankind. Jaspers argues that world history must begin with the "axial times" (approximately 800-200 B.C.). It was in this period, according to Jaspers, that there took place the parallel development of powerful spiritual processes in China, India, Persia, Palestine and Ancient Greece, which impelled man to reflect on the meaning of the existence and gradually to free himself of mythological illusions. In short, this was an age of "spiritual fission". One result of this philosophical breakthrough was the spread of reflective thought which was to have widely different consequences. It was in this era, Jaspers says, that the basic categories were formulated which guide our thinking to this day, are intrinsic to the world's religions and still direct the lives of peoples. There was



a general transition to universality.<sup>26</sup>

Jaspers avoids defining the character of this epoch. But he enumerates the great spiritual processes of the time and their continued development in the first millennium B.C. and in the first antagonistic social formation. It should not be difficult to see that Jaspers' "axial times", the existence of which he substantiates from purely idealistic positions, actually reflect the process in the first millennium B.C. of the rise and growth of the first antagonistic class, slave-owning socio-economic formation.

A fundamental feature of anti-Marxist historiography is absolutisation of the particular, the nationally specific. For the anti-Marxist fears serious generalisations, preferring to deal with individual, artificially isolated facts, events, ideas. He carefully avoids conceptions that would suggest regularities in the development of society, or even the concept of historical progress. He artificially partitions the universal process of history, dividing it into separate links, facets, structures, and this tends to exaggerate the particular and precludes all possibility of analysing it in its dynamic movement and giving it a truly objective appraisal. In particular, there has been much greater activity of late by adherents of nationalistic historiography. Their aim is artificially to separate the process of history of a given country from the course of world history.

Marxist historiography has many achievements to its credit in illuminating the historical past traversed by many peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America. "Eurocentrism" is totally alien to it. Marxist-Leninist historical science strongly rejects all nationalistic and racist conceptions. Expressed in this is also the common tendency of anti-Marxist historiography to negate all regularities of social development and give prominence to the specific, in this case the national specifics.

Internationalism is part of the objectivity of Marxist-Leninist historical science. It wholly rejects a biased attitude to the history of any people or the tendencies to be-

little or exaggerate the role of any nationality in the historical process.

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## Section II. The Laws of the World Historical Process

### SOCIOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL LAWS

Even in antiquity it was well understood that historical facts and events have to be explained. In Thucydides and Polybio one already finds rudiments of the idea of laws of the historical process. At a time when the bourgeoisie was in the ascendant and fought against feudal ideas, particularly that of divine Predestination as the universal motive force of nature and society, bourgeois ideologists did not reject the existence of objective or natural laws. Montesquieu wrote, for instance, that "laws, in the most extended meaning of the term, are the necessary connections which derive from the nature of things; in this sense, all beings have their laws..."<sup>1</sup>

In the period of modern history, there were many attempts to formulate laws of social development. However, the interpretation of these laws was extremely one-sided and limited. It was dominated by the tendency of Auguste Comte, and especially his followers, John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer, to transform historical science into an applied natural science discipline.

It was only Marx's discovery of the materialist interpretation of history which provided a really solid foundation for historical science. Objective knowledge supplanted countless speculative hypotheses and sometimes remarkable conjectures worthy of genius (of Saint-Simon). Historical science was now able to interpret the immense quantities of factual information with which it had to deal. This was made possible by the discovery and employment in historical research of an extremely powerful instrument--the category of objective law.

The law, taking it in the sense of an established interdependence and connection between phenomena (essences), became an integral part of historical knowledge, transforming it into a system, into a genuine science. In his notes on Hegel's Science of Logic, Lenin pointed out: "The concept of law is one of the stages of the cognition by man of unity and connection, of the reciprocal dependence and wholeness of the world process".<sup>2</sup> Lenin formulated the concept of law as "relation of essences or between essences".<sup>3</sup>

The materialist interpretation of history made it possible to create a science of the general laws of social development--historical materialism. These general laws (those relating to the interconnections between the basis and the superstructure, to changes in the social system in accordance with changes in the forces of production, to the dependence of social consciousness on social being, and many others) are relevant to society as a whole. For that reason they are called general sociological laws.

They form the foundation for understanding all social phenomena; therefore all other social sciences, including history, are based on historical materialism. At the same time, each special social science reveals and studies the more specific laws pertaining usually not to society as a whole, but to concrete aspects of social activity. "It is, of course, impossible to explain the concrete historical process with the aid of universal laws only. But it is well known that any law is only applicable under definite conditions: it is the law of a definite class of phenomena. Certain general sociological laws operate in history which are necessary for any human society (e.g., the law that social being is determining social consciousness, the law that relations of production correspond to the nature of the forces of production, etc.). At the same time, each socio-economic formation has its own specific laws, so that any concrete social phenomenon is subject to the operation of many laws, both general and specific."<sup>4</sup>

As compared to historical materialism, the Marxist science of the past studies the more special laws of social

development. These are called historical laws. In scientific literature there are attempts to delimitate the concept of law and regularity. In fact, these concepts cannot be opposed to each other. General sociological and historical laws are assertions of the normative and regular nature of certain processes and phenomena. It follows that a regularity is an action corresponding to a law and determined by it. In works of history, the "regular" is interpreted as the usual, that is, as something in which no "specificity" is manifested. In this kind of usage, the term "regularity" loses its genuine meaning. Historical laws emerge and act under concrete conditions of time and place. Their origin is conditioned entirely by the development of society, by its progressive movement.

Marx and Engels regarded the historical process principally as movement, stressing its dynamism. Engels wrote: "History is made in such a way that the final result always arises from conflicts between many individual wills, of which each in turn has been made what it is by a host of particular conditions of life. Thus there are innumerable intersecting forces, an infinite series of parallelograms of forces which give rise to one resultant--the historical event. This may again itself be viewed as the product of a power which works as a whole unconsciously and without volition. For what each individual wills is obstructed by everyone else, and what emerges is something that no one willed. Thus history has proceeded hitherto in the manner of a natural process and is essentially subject to the same laws of motion. But from the fact that the wills of individuals--each of whom desires what he is impelled to by his physical constitution and external, in the last resort economic, circumstances (either his own personal circumstances or those of society in general)--do not attain what they want, but are merged into an aggregate mean, a common resultant, it must not be concluded that they are equal to zero. On the contrary, each contributes to the resultant and is to this extent included in it."<sup>5</sup> Developing this idea, Engels indicated that, unlike nature, where only blind unconscious forces act and general laws are manifested in the interaction of these

forces, "in the history of society.. the actors are all endowed with consciousness, are men acting with deliberation or passion, working towards definite goals; nothing happens without a conscious purpose, without an intended aim. But this distinction, important as it is for historical investigation, particularly of single epochs and events, cannot alter the fact that the course of history is governed by inner general laws... Where on the surface accident holds sway, there actually it is always governed by inner, hidden laws and it is only a matter of discovering these laws".<sup>6</sup>

What is the origin of historical laws?

If we were to look for the source of historical regularities in individual acts and desires, which commonly contradict one another, we would be unable to cast off the yoke of chance. Historical facts provide evidence, however, that at all times there have been major events accompanied by serious changes in the lives of great masses of people--entire nations and classes rather than individuals. The only certain way of discovering the laws of social development is to study the causes which set great masses of people in motion, and result in substantial or, as Engels put it, "great historical changes" in their destiny. Of course, the scholar has to take into account that the genuine causes of these "great historical changes" are often distorted or even fantastically reflected in people's consciousness, and in the dominant ideas and conceptions. The incentives motivating the masses or their ideologists, their leaders, do not always adequately correspond to the great historical processes which are actually taking place. But the study and comparison of concrete information characterising the essence of historical changes, that is, the movement of society, can provide a key to revealing the objective regularities of this movement, however deeply they might be concealed by a mass of chance events.

As society develops, economic relations as absolutely dominant relations act more and more openly and nakedly. It is easier in this sense to establish the effect of objective laws in capitalist society than in feudal or slave-owning society.

It is a well-known fact that pre-Marxian bourgeois science (Guizot, Mignet, Thierry) recognised the existence of classes and class struggle. The modern French historian Mousnier definitely takes a step back compared to these classic figures of bourgeois historiography when he opposes the term "social stratum" (strate) to the Marxist concept "class". He claims that Marx unjustifiably extended a "particular case" (the class division of capitalist society) to the entire history of human society. According to Mousnier, social strata are formed as a result of differences in the nature of labour or other functions they perform, regardless of ownership of the means of production.<sup>7</sup> The "elimination" of the "class" concept and the substitution of the artificial "stratification of society" for it is a common feature of modern Western historiography.

When he studies social development, the historian deals with two kinds of objective laws: first, the general sociological laws discovered by the founders of Marxism, which are of prime significance; and second, historical laws which usually are revealed in the investigation itself.

The study of general sociological laws is not the function of historical science, but historical science studies the action of general sociological laws in the historical process under concrete conditions of time and place. One of the functions of historical research is to trace the effect of a general sociological regularity on the diverse phenomena of the historical process, in establishing the links between general sociological laws and the more specific historical laws. General sociological and historical laws are closely interdependent, and their actions are continually interwoven.

Any sociological law, even the most abstract, is at the same time historical: in the first place, it has a certain duration, and is in this sense variable; in the second, it is a result of the juxtaposition, analysis, and generalisation of certain historical experiences, of repetition in practice. The essence of general sociological laws consists in revealing the most general principles of the development and movement of society regardless of the concrete forms in which

they are embodied. The content of the laws that are properly historical is determined by establishing the specific traits and features of the development and movement of society in its concrete forms. At the same time, historical laws reveal the mechanism of action of general sociological laws under concrete historical conditions. In this respect they are subordinate to the general sociological laws. But the role of historical laws is not, of course, exhausted by the concretisation of their operation. As they are genetically linked to general sociological laws, they also have certain independence, and in turn form a system of coordinated, interrelated, and mutually interdependent historical laws of a more or less specific nature pertaining to different forms of society or stages of its development.

Sociological laws are manifested in vast processes as general tendencies of development. Historical laws operate within comparatively short periods of time, and are formed on the basis of an ensemble of relations of social development at a given stage of a given type of society.

The correlation of general sociological and historical laws (both the more general and the more specific) may be tentatively expressed in the categories of the dialectical relations between the general, the particular, and the individual. This approach completely eliminates any opposing of some laws to others and assumes their connections and interpenetration.

The law that the relations of production must correspond to the level of productive forces is an example of a general sociological law which is determining for many historical laws. This general sociological law, which absolutely dominates the specific laws, can be said to interconnect all socio-economic formations and thus makes it possible to consider social development as a single natural-historical process. The general sociological law posits that changes in the mode of production become a necessary consequence of progress in the forces of production which at a certain stage require discarding and the replacement of the obsolete production relations that are impeding development. Their "natural-historical" interaction determines the entire course

of world history, as it is the objective source of social progress. Human history is a continual progress from the lower to the higher and more advanced forms of socio-economic organisation. But this general sociological law is definitely not realised in a mechanical way.

The law of class struggle in antagonistic formations is another example of an extremely important sociological law, and is itself a derivative of the even more general law of materialist dialectics of the unity and struggle of opposites. The range of application of this law is extremely broad, and its concrete manifestation is possible at extremely diverse levels--from the socio-economic formation level down to the most basic elementary cell of the social organism.

Another general sociological law which flows out of the first law and is of fundamental significance for historical science is the law of the progressive replacement of one socio-economic formation by another. This law is in turn the source of several correlated historical laws, which are a manifestation of both the general principle of motion (emergence, development, and decline) of definite socio-economic formations and of the forms of concrete development of their individual components or stages.

It goes without saying that the entire complex hierarchy of historical laws cannot be deduced through abstract logical constructions, as they are rather a result of profound generalisation of the information of historical research. The relationship between general sociological and historical laws is sometimes compared with that between the categories of the logical and the empirical, with general sociological laws regarded as the logical, and generalisation at the empirical level regarded as the historical. This opposition seems to us to be oversimplified. Any laws of social development, both the more general and the more specific, are a unity of the logical and the empirical, for a historical law, or the principal tendency in the movement of a given society, necessarily possesses a logical "core".

The dialectical unity of the logical and the empirical does not signify their identity, or the absence of any difference between the two. Historical events do not always happen in the order assumed by the logic of social development. This is shown particularly clearly by examples of the concrete replacement of certain socio-economic formations by others, and by the possibility of bypassing the slave-owning or the capitalist stages of development in certain conditions. The logical cannot, therefore, be simply reduced to the empirical, although one cannot exist without the other. The greater the scale of historical research, the clearer their unity stands out.

Closely linked to this is another question. The view is current that only general sociological laws are applicable at the socio-economic formation level, that is, in the study of socio-economic formations considered as a whole. It is absolutely true that in considering socio-economic formations as major stages or steps in the development of human society, one certainly ascribes greater significance to theoretical abstraction. General sociological laws are of prime importance here. Even so, the above view is erroneous, as it proceeds from a denial of the fact that socio-economic formations are a historical reality and not simply a logical abstraction. Apart from the general sociological laws, specific historical laws are inherent in each socio-economic formation as a whole. Thus, the founders of scientific communism discovered a goodly number of historical laws reflecting the specificity of the capitalist formation as a whole. At the same time, these laws are concretely historical in nature. It is enough to remember here the historical law of the transition of capitalism to the monopoly stage which Lenin discovered and formulated. The discovery of this economic and at the same time historical law entailed the establishment of several other laws, of smaller compass but extremely significant for understanding the essence of the capitalist formation.

Another example of a historical law, which Lenin discovered through the study of bourgeois revolutions in Europe, was that the character of bourgeois democracy and the measure

of democracy depend on the degree to which hegemony passes on to the lower classes rather than to the bourgeoisie.<sup>8</sup>

It has already been pointed out that general sociological laws are essentially historical laws as well. A great many general sociological laws can be called, on good grounds, economic laws also; such as the universal law of the correspondence of the relations of production to the level of the productive forces.

No historical study based on dialectical materialism can fail to pursue the goal of a scientific explanation of the processes and phenomena being analysed. "History becomes a science", wrote Plekhanov, "only in so far as it succeeds in explaining from the point of view of sociology the processes it portrays".<sup>9</sup> The knowledge of the general sociological laws studied by Marxist sociology, i.e., by historical materialism, provides the historian with an instrument for discovering the objective explanation for the facts he is examining. The goal of historical inquiry is to elucidate the mechanism of the sufficiently well-known general sociological laws under concrete historical conditions rather than to collect illustrations of their effect. Fundamental differences in time and place, and in the material conditions of the functioning of a given type of society often entail not only changes in the way the general laws are manifested, but also an eventual increase in or, quite the opposite, a weakening of their impact. The historical process, influenced by an ensemble of laws, is thus completely free from any mystical predestination.

The uneven character and multiplicity of forms of historical development increase as one moves away from the socio-economic formation level, and approaches time-and-place-bound history which is particularly abundant in "chance events". In this area of study the historian encounters the greatest difficulties, which at the same time open up the perspectives for independent theoretical conclusions and generalisations. "The historian's attentive and inquisitive scrutiny is directed at a variety of historical laws, which, although they are connected to general socio-

logical laws, cannot be reduced to them. The historian can discover the specific historical laws by studying the interaction of economic, political and ideological processes in social life. The general sociological laws reflect the material basis of this interaction, indicating the role of the economy, politics and ideology in historical development. But the elucidation of the laws of these processes in their interaction under definite concrete conditions is the job of historical science".<sup>10</sup>

In a concrete historical process, the general is always manifested in the particular. It follows that the general and the law-governed are the criterion for selecting the facts in a historical study. General sociological laws merely provide the guidelines for the researcher: they are definitely not a universal key for explaining all historical events. The deeper the researcher delves into the layers of concrete historical events, into the particular and the individual, and the farther away from the upper strata of cognition, the greater the need for the creative generalisation and theoretical interpretation of the factual information. This assumes, of course, an enormous amount of preparatory work on the verification, specification, and classification of the factual documentary data. The historian must also be completely versed in the historiographic heritage of his area of research. Only once this great and complicated endeavour is accomplished, it is possible to engage in serious independent theoretical generalisation, which by far not always results in the discovery of a new historical law.

The discovery of historical laws assumes the accumulation and study of recurring facts and phenomena in the historical process. Of course, it is not a question of mechanical repetition (which is practically impossible) but of discovery of similar situations in a general socio-economic structure characterised by uniform causal dependencies. As Lenin pointed out, the general scientific criterion of repetition was initially confirmed by an analysis of the relations of production, which later made it possible to establish repetition in the social sphere as well, in "the social phe-

nomena of the various countries".<sup>11</sup> Repetition of phenomena does not imply their identity, nor does the discovery of general law eliminate therefore the necessity of studying the specificity of individual phenomena falling within the sphere of this law.

The goal of historical research is to establish the law of development of a given concrete society, often hidden very deeply, to isolate it from a mass of "chance events", and to discover the specific forms in which this law manifests itself, or its specific derivatives. The dialectical unity of the general, the particular and the individual enables one to discern the general in the particular reflecting the local or temporal features, the general providing, in the final analysis, the objective qualitative characteristic of the historical process. Historical science cannot avoid studying not only the law-governed and the necessary, but the accidental as well. It studies everything that reflects the operation of historical laws, and everything that contradicts the manifestation of certain historical tendencies, for that is exactly what comprises the actual historical process.

Historical law sometimes appears as a kind of resultant of many conflicting forces and diverse historical factors. The point has to be made quite clearly that this does not at all imply the equality of all these factors, but neither does it overturn the thesis that the determining factor in the final analysis is the economic determination of the historical process.

Some bourgeois historians sometimes audaciously recognise that there are definite laws of social development, although they do so with many reservations. Typical in this sense is the French historian M. Bouvier-Ajam, who believes that sociology is the study of the social process and its components taken as a whole, whereas history must analyse concrete facts and the various phases of this process. As he believes, the experience of studying economic history shows, for example, that the fact of defective coins supplanting full-weight coins in the course of money circul-

ation, as confirmed by numerous studies, cannot be called a permanent law. Bouvier-Ajam, therefore, emphasises the conventional nature of the concept of historical law. Any historical law lacks the degree of universality which would warrant this appellation.<sup>12</sup> This historian, like many other critics of Marxism, presents the materialist conception of historical law in a purely mechanistic fashion.

Of considerable theoretical interest is the question of alternatives in history. Some critics of Marxism propose the idea of alternatives with the obvious intention of questioning the existence of the objective laws of historical development. The existence of alternatives is presented here as the substantiation of the accidental direction of historical development. This is an obvious substitution of one concept for another. No one is going to deny the abundance of "accidents" in history. One can speak in this sense of multiplicity of variants the course of historical events may take rather than of alternatives. But this has nothing to do with the general direction of the historical process, which is always ultimately determined by society's economic needs.

The concrete historical process is complex and contradictory. As was noted above, mankind's progressive movement is never rectilinear, but involves all sorts of "zigzags". This is the only sense in which one can speak of alternatives in history. It is, therefore, a matter of definite form in which social development is realised, subject nevertheless to the action of objective laws. Alternatives arise primarily at the lower stages of social development, in the microprocesses of given social organisms. The greater the historical scale, the more distinct is the overall trend--the objective laws of social development overcoming the mass of "accidents".

G. Stiehler (GDR) correctly points out that the number of possibilities ("alternatives") in the historical process grows as one moves farther away from the basis, where objective laws dominate. In the superstructure, where subjective factors are of overriding importance, the multiplicity

of variants of the historical process grows.<sup>13</sup> It follows from this that alternatives in history are limited and conventional. It does not rule out the general laws of social development. At the same time it should be clearly realised that the determinism of the historical process should not be understood simplistically. New laws of social movement will probably be discovered as a result of creative endeavour by people in different social sciences, including history.

As the sciences studying society are rapidly becoming more and more differentiated, there is also a growing tendency towards their cooperation, which makes possible a more comprehensive interdisciplinary study of extremely complex phenomena and processes of social development.

The opponents of Marxism attempt to disprove the existence of objective laws of social development, referring principally to the diversity of the concrete forms in which social development takes place. The critique of Marxism is primarily levelled at the concept itself of law in social relations. The principal arguments are based on the fact that historical development does not allow the recurrence of identical or coinciding situations, and therefore, makes impossible the formulation of objective laws pertaining to society--as distinct from nature, where laws actually do exist. It may be noted, by the way, that uniqueness and individuality of events and phenomena is by no means a specific feature of social development. There is also uniqueness in nature, as well as a great diversity of phenomena and forms which are nevertheless explained by objective laws.

Acceptance or denial of the laws of social development is a most important dividing line between Marxist and non-Marxist historiography. Most modern opponents of Marxism try to dissociate themselves from recognition of objective laws in the historical process, justifying this attempt by a deliberately vulgarised and falsified interpretation of the concept "economic determinism" itself. They distort determinism to present it as something which functions auto-



matically and completely excludes creative activity. The concept of economic determinism is thus taken to the point of absurdity, while the materialist conception of the historical process is treated as a rectilinear and monochromatic interpretation. This is a clear indication, first of all, that these "critics" have no idea of dialectics at all. For example, in his critique of Marxism, Karl Popper rejects the possibility of discovering the law of society's motion.<sup>14</sup> He proceeds from the false interpretation, which has some currency, of economic development as something completely unconnected with other manifestations of social life. On these grounds Popper insists that economic development cannot play a determining role, as it is itself subject to the influence of scientific and religious ideas.

Some Marxists have defended the idea of the automatic action of objective laws. Even a major revolutionary theoretician like Rosa Luxemburg made mechanistic errors of this kind. However, admitting that the historical process is law-governed, and that there are both general sociological and concrete historical laws in operation is not fatalism. Opponents of Marxism most frequently attack the proposition that the realisation of the economic laws of social motion is not automatic but requires the activity of the people. This dialectical thesis is considered evidence of a contradiction between the objective nature of the laws of the movement of society and the need for their subjective manifestation. In fact, there is no contradiction at all. It is quite obvious that what we have is a dialectical interconnection between the objective and the subjective aspects of the integral historical process. Objective economic conditions create the possibility of the emergence of the subjective factor, and activate and strengthen it. In its turn, the dynamic action of the subjective factor facilitates and accelerates the manifestation of the potential inherent in the objective aspect of the historical process. So it is a question of the dialectical unity of form and content.

The laws of social development express the objective economically determined direction of the motion of society.

They do not depend on the will of men and cannot be arbitrarily decreed or abolished. However, as Lenin pointed out, any sociological law "is narrow, incomplete, approximate".<sup>15</sup> It is, therefore, clear that any metaphysical, formal-logical approach to the interpretation of social development characteristic of the opponents of Marxism is totally untenable.

Laws do not function by themselves, they are manifested only through social practice. The totality of concrete historical conditions may either slow down or accelerate the realisation of the primary tendency expressed by a law or even temporarily oppose it. Historical experience shows that human progress has proceeded not only in zigzags, but that there have also been retreats in specific temporal and local spheres. This makes obvious the great significance for history of the really progressive social forces that most adequately reflect the needs of their time, that is, of the concrete historical epoch. Their activity helps establish the general sociological and historical laws, being in agreement with the tendency they express. The diversity of social phenomena is an indubitable reality.

The laws of social development do not at all abolish this reality. They only determine the leading tendency of this development, which is not always visible on the surface but which in the final analysis necessarily depends on the correlation between the existing relations of production and the constantly changing level of the productive forces. Changes in the productive forces ultimately predetermine the most profound social changes. But society does not remain inert either. The objective tendencies of development conditioned by the motion of the material productive forces are realised only through society's own activity and the results of the confrontation of the conflicting internal forces. The materialist interpretation of history is organically alien to vulgar mechanism. In different historical epochs, the laws of social development break down the barriers and triumph sooner or later--the length of historical periods this process involves is dependent on the activity

of the genuine creators of history, the popular masses. "History is nothing but the activity of man pursuing his aims".<sup>16</sup>

The activity of the progressive social forces (classes, parties, and individuals) corresponding to the needs of progressive motion of society and representing the subjective aspects of the historical process becomes in this case an expression of an objective tendency. It goes without saying that this approach to the question is of special significance, primary significance for that matter, for the present epoch, when the communist formation, which is in its first phase, is opposing capitalism and developing successfully in a situation where the role of the subjective factor is constantly growing, this factor is itself functioning on the basis of cognised objective laws and becoming a great transforming force.

It is also noteworthy that many Western historians, who on the whole are idealists and hesitate to recognise laws, realise at the same time that any serious scientific analysis is incompatible with the rejection of theoretical interpretation and the generalisation of concrete historical materials. A graphic illustration of this is O.F. Anderle's "plea for theoretical history": "History is in great danger of sliding into chaos. The need to keep inner form is more pressing than in any other area of culture. Tradition, inner correlation, and consistent development are nowhere of greater significance than in history".<sup>17</sup> At the same time Anderle believes that this critical condition of bourgeois science is no oul-de-sac but a definite stage in its development, a transition from description to theory. The "theoretical history" advocated by Anderle demands the establishment of uniformity and repetition of types and models, as well as the development of general concepts. At the same time Anderle notes that the "theoretical history" does not necessarily presuppose the establishment of general laws, for in history there are no strict, constantly operating laws due to the absence of recurrence of absolutely identical conditions.<sup>18</sup>

The interest of Western historians and sociologists in the problem of law in historical development is apparent; this was particularly obvious from the conference on the problem of laws in various sciences held at the Technical Higher School at Karlsruhe (FRG) in 1964. In their papers there, F.-G. Maier and E. Topitsch were on the whole negative towards laws in history. At the same time both had to admit that the issues of law in the historical process were first raised in the works of the ancient--Thucydides and Polybio. Topitsch said that Thucydides' historical works, which grew out of the "great crisis of the Hellenic polis during the Peloponnesian war", contained not only descriptions of various historical events and characteristics of individual figures, but also demonstrated the author's desire for cognising the laws of human social conduct primarily in the realm of politics during a war.<sup>19</sup>

Maier's position was even more categorical: "The question of such historical laws is actually as old as European historiography itself. Thucydides was convinced that he had observed, through a kind of empirical generalisation, certain regularities of conduct of groups and individuals in history. Side by side with this idea of law-governed recurrence of definite individual situations and conditions in history Polybio posits... a second type of historical law, which expresses the regular recurrence of individual sequences in an overlapping and determined overall process".<sup>20</sup> In Maier's view, after Thucydides and Polybio the tradition of "law-forming" historical thought was never interrupted. He made a special point of the ideas of Hegel and Marx: "Hegel gave a sketch of a dialectical but at the same time finite and determined process of world history, in which individuals and nations are mere instruments of the over-riding world spirit, which in its turn necessarily unfolds itself according to the law of superpersonal reason. Out of this, Marx and historical materialism have created, through replacing the Hegelian ideas by "material productive forces", a dialectical law of the course of history, in which the law-governed variation in the relations of production determines the historical process".<sup>21</sup> He nevertheless

spoke out strongly against the idea that historical science can cognise the objective laws of the historical process. But he was compelled to recognise, in the spirit of Max Weber, that there is a need for typification of phenomena in the science of history. For this reason Maier regards as admissible only "general statements", which nevertheless remain hypotheses, about certain series of historical events.<sup>22</sup>

Certain bourgeois historians who believe that history is an individualising science admit that generalising hypotheses may be applied at the first stage of historical research as substitutes for general laws.<sup>23</sup> But that does not in any way signify recognition of objective laws of social development. Collingwood, White and many other bourgeois historians strongly object even to a tentative modelling of "comprehensive" (that is, sociological and historical) laws of the past. The most radical position was taken by White, who wrote that there was no answer to the question of the essence of historical explanation.<sup>24</sup>

As has already been indicated, objective laws are first of all expressed in the activity of progressive social forces. But this activity assumes an extremely acute struggle between the old and the new, which may take various forms and proceed on different planes. It may be a direct economic struggle for the survival and consolidation of a new and more advanced structure which has arisen within the framework of a definite socio-economic formation. The conflict between the old and the new social and class forces is often manifested in a rather camouflaged form as confrontation between relatively abstract political, philosophical, and religious doctrines.

The action of the general sociological law of the obligatory correspondence of the relations of production to the level of the productive forces, combined with the action of another and equally general sociological law, the law of class struggle in antagonistic formations, determines the principal tendency of social development and at the same time the general direction of social progress. Class strug-

gle apparently assumes resistance by reactionary social forces representing obsolete social relations and order that are being relegated to history to the progressive and new elements who come to replace them. Social progress in antagonistic formations is realised in fierce confrontation between the old and the new. "No antagonism, no progress. This is the law that civilisation has followed up to our days".<sup>25</sup> History shows that the struggle of opposing social forces may for a while be inconclusive. The law-tendency is opposed by an objective existing countertendency expressing the force of the inertia of the old which is unwilling to voluntarily give way to the new.

Not only general theoretical considerations but also the study of the world historical process provide an objective foundation for an optimistic appraisal of its perspectives. The laws of social development which have actually functioned throughout the history of human society warrant the conclusion that its movement is progressive.

The existence of objective laws of social development opens up the prospects for a substantiated prognostication of the historical progress. The past is more and more clearly seen as forward movement, whose internal contradictions are extremely complicated, but which is still amenable to explanation, and not as an agglomeration of isolated facts and events. This enables us to build a bridge between the past and the present, regarding today as the continuation of yesterday. History as science can thus go beyond the rigidly defined boundaries separating it from real life, and take its place among the disciplines which should facilitate social activity and an understanding of the tasks of the future as well as of the present.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Ch. Montesquieu, De l'esprit des lois, Paris, s.a., Vol. 1, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> V.I. Lenin, Collected Works, Moscow, Vol. 38, pp. 150-151.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 153.

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## SOCIO-ECONOMIC FORMATIONS

The Marxist-Leninist proposition that the forward movement of society is subject to the objective laws of development, is especially applicable to the theory of the progressive change of socio-economic formations. For clearly and sharply revealed here is the irreconcilable difference between the materialist and idealist understanding of history. This applies both to the base-proposition (sociological law) of mankind's continuous advance, through consecutive stages, from lower to higher forms of the organisation of society, and to the existence of objective regularities of development for every socio-economic formation.

The theory of socio-economic formations is the cornerstone of the materialist conception of history. Referring to this discovery of Marx, Lenin wrote: "By examining the totality of opposing tendencies, by reducing them to precisely definable conditions of life and production of the various classes of society, by discarding subjectivism and arbitrariness in the choice of a particular 'dominant' idea or in its interpretation, and by revealing that, without exception, all ideas and all the various tendencies stem from the condition of the material forces of production, Marxism indicated the way to an all-embracing and comprehensive study of the process of the rise, development, and decline of socio-economic systems."<sup>1</sup>

A theoretical examination of this global process presupposes an analysis of its more common, typical features, with due account of the obstacles mankind has had to surmount in its progress.

The concept "socio-economic formation" is multidimensional. It includes, above all, definition of the phase of economic development achieved by mankind. And its core is the category "mode of production" which expresses a definite degree of correspondence (unity) of prevalent production relations to the level of existing and constantly expanding productive forces. This concept includes not only the economic basis of a given society, but also its highly complex superstructure. Consequently, the socio-economic formation represents the unity of three principal components:

- 1) productive forces;
- 2) production relations corresponding to them, which determine the pattern of the economic system;
- 3) the superstructure.

Every socio-economic formation reflects a clearly definable stage in mankind's advance from lower to higher forms of its existence. At the same time, it is the embodiment of widely different forms of concrete social organisms, but at one and the same level of historical development. The multiplicity of such concrete variants in a given socio-economic formation (e.g., differing forms of feudal relations in many European and Asian countries) fully justifies the formula "unity in diversity". But a mechanistic interpretation of mankind's continuous progress disregards the determinative role of the concrete activity of social man and of the people generally. From this follows the inevitable difference not only in specific forms, but also in the development pace of the common worldwide process of history.

Lenin wrote that Marx, by singling out 'production relations as the main factor in the structure and development of the capitalist formation, "everywhere and incessantly scrutinised the superstructure corresponding to these production relations and clothed the skeleton in flesh and blood. The reason Capital has enjoyed such tremendous success

is that this book by a 'German economist' showed the whole capitalist social formation to the reader as a living thing--with its everyday aspects, with the actual social manifestation of the class antagonism inherent in production relations, with the bourgeois political superstructure that protects the rule of the capitalist class, with the bourgeois ideas of liberty, equality, and so forth, with the bourgeois family relationships."<sup>2</sup>

Economic relations play the determinative, and consequently the more constant and stabilising role, in the rise and development of every socio-economic formation. Lenin remarked that Marx formulated his underlying idea of the natural-historical process of the development of socio-economic formations "by singling out the economic sphere from which the various spheres of social life, by singling out production relations from all social relations as being basic, primary, determining all other relations".<sup>3</sup> However, it should also be borne in mind that (as Marx points out), "the same economic basis--the same from the standpoint of its main conditions--due to innumerable different empirical circumstances, natural environment, racial relations, external historical influences, etc., from showing infinite variations and gradations in appearance, which can be ascertained only by analysis of the empirically given circumstances."<sup>4</sup>

It would be wrong to reduce the concept of socio-economic formation to the mode of production. By its very nature it is highly dynamic.

Deprived of one or another of its components, the socio-economic formation loses its character of a unified system expressive of a definite level or stage in the development of society. The contradictions and ceaseless internal struggle within this unity power the development of the formation and should not, of course, place in question its systems quality, close interaction of its various components. And it is equally wrong to separate, still less counterpose, its economic and social aspects.

Of special interest in dealing with this problem is the collective work of GDR historians, The Theory of Forma-

tions and History, edited by E. Engelberg and W. Küttler.<sup>5</sup> Guided by the relevant pronouncements of Marx, Engels and Lenin, the authors examine the rise and development of the capitalist formation in the 19th and 20th centuries, with special reference to Lenin's theory of socialist revolution and the transition from capitalism to communism.

In summarising the discussion among Marxist scholars, it should be noted that the multidimensional concept of socio-economic formation has found reflection in many works of the founders of scientific communism. There is, for instance, this passage in Capital: "Whatever the social form of production, labourers and means of production always remain factors of it. But in a state of separation from each other either of these factors can be such only potentially. For production to go on at all they must unite. The specific manner in which this union is accomplished distinguishes the different economic epochs of the structure of society from one another."<sup>6</sup> Note Marx's reference to the "specific manner", i.e., the concrete system of uniting, "coupling" and assuring the interaction of the cardinal elements of social production, that determines their qualitative difference.

Engels pointed out that the emergence of large-scale landholding was predetermined by the alienation of land. He wrote: "The allodium made it not only possible, but also necessary to transform the initial equality of landholding into its opposite. For with the establishment of the allodium by the Germans on former Roman territory, the land became what Roman landholding had long been, a commodity. And such is the inexorable law of all societies founded on commodity production and exchange: the distribution of property becomes increasingly unequal, the gap between the rich and the poor becomes ever wider, with property increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few .... From the very rise of the allodium land is freely alienated and becomes a commodity, and the emergence of big landholdings becomes only a matter of time."<sup>7</sup>

Extra-economic coercion of the producer is an essential factor in the functioning of pre-bourgeois antagonistic formations. This has found glaring expression in the slave-owning formation. The slave works under coercion and with tools provided by his owner. In contrast, the feudally dependent peasant has his "own" husbandry, but his relative economic independence is always "complemented" by extra-economic coercion. Lenin wrote: "A condition for such a system of economy was the personal dependence of the peasant on the landlord. If the landlord had not possessed direct power over the person of the peasant, he could not have compelled a man who had a plot of land and ran his own farm to work for him."<sup>8</sup> It would be wrong, however, to exaggerate the role of extra-economic coercion in general and under feudalism in particular.

In demolishing Nöhring's fallacious contentions on the dominant role of coercion, Engels emphasised: "Wherever private property evolved it was the result of altered relations of production and exchange, in the interest of increased production and in furtherance of intercourse--hence as a result of economic causes. Force plays no part in this at all."<sup>9</sup>

History knows of instances of a temporary regression resulting from mass coercion, military invasion and destruction of the productive forces when the victorious invader brought with him more backward social forms. "In all conquests," Marx wrote, "there can be one of three results. The conquering people impose on the vanquished their own mode of production in this century (for instance, the English in Ireland, partly in India); or retain the old mode of production, and are satisfied with tribute (for instance, the Turks and Romans); or there is an interaction to produce a kind of synthesis (as partly is the case of the German conquests). In all cases it is the mode of production, whether imposed by the victors, retained by the vanquished, or produced by a combination of both, that determines the new mode of exchange that is established. And though it acts as the prerequisite for a new period of production,

it is itself the product of production and not only in the historical sense, but of definite historical production."<sup>10</sup>

Economic determinism in the world historical process is manifested mainly on a large scale and not automatically, but rather through the activity of the masses, their struggle, often involving mutually opposed interests the result of which indicates, in the final analysis, the main trend of society's progressive development. The general direction of social development is not a choice made by people and does not depend on their desires, but is determined in the process of transition from one level of development of the productive forces to another, higher one. Lenin remarked in this connection: "In actual fact, men's ends are engendered by the objective world and presuppose it--they find it as something given, present. But it seems to man as if his ends are taken from outside the world, and are independent of the world ('freedom')."<sup>11</sup>

The rise and development of socio-economic formations are identical in basic essential features. The development of each country through its various stages is subject to laws common to all countries. The mode of production determines the essence of the socio-economic formation, its type of social relations, its principles of social organisation and its dominant ideology. But identical essence does not mean identical forms.

The superstructure is not a passive element: changes in it influence the socio-economic formation as a whole. Engels emphasised that negation of the independent historical development of ideological spheres that play a role in history is tantamount to rejecting all possibility of their influencing history. He wrote: "The basis of this is the common undialectical conception of cause and effect as rigidly opposite poles, the total disregarding of interaction ... Once a historic element has been brought into the world by other, ultimately economic causes, it reacts, can react on its environment and even on the causes that have given rise to it."<sup>12</sup> This confirms the absolute need

to analyse and systematise partial features of the super-structure.

Differences within one and the same antagonistic formation can result from the organisation pattern of the ruling classes, including the structure of state power. Theocratical pre-bourgeois state forms, to cite one example, can strongly influence the pattern of a formation, especially if the church feudals have the upper hand over their secular brethren. As a rule, such phenomena exert a certain influence on forms of the class struggle. Besides, in all antagonistic formations there are residual elements of more archaic social relations.

A dogmatic and doctrinaire approach to the theory of socio-economic formations is inadmissible. There are no "chemically pure" processes in nature and even less in society. Lenin repeatedly emphasised that Marxism, and reality, do not know of any "pure" processes. Every socio-economic formation has certain "alien" elements, and upon their relative weight depends the level of the dominant social relations. "Did feudalism ever correspond to its concept?" Engels asked Karl Schmidt in a letter dated March 12, 1895, and he continued: "Founded in the kingdom of the West Franks, further developed in Normandy by the Norwegian conquerors, its formation continued by the French Norsemen in England and Southern Italy, it came nearest to its concept—in the ephemeral kingdom of Jerusalem, which in the Assize of Jerusalem left behind it the most classic expression of the feudal order."<sup>13</sup>

We have always to take into account the many widely differing and dissimilar aspects of every socio-economic formation.

Ancient and Asiatic slave-owning relations provide many examples of dissimilar concrete forms within one and the same formation. In both cases there are abundant specific features, and they have engendered a discussion about the formational classification of whole regions. A similar discussion arose over the history of Byzantium (many challenged the existence of the Byzantine feudalism). It should

be noted, in this context, that it would be illogical to expect identical patterns within a formation, considering geographic, ethnic and other factors that influence the development of society.

Feudalism, the dominant mode of production in the world for at least one thousand years, was distinguished by the wide range of its concrete forms. And much the same applies to other socio-economic systems.

We know, for instance, the wide differences of capitalist forms within the "classical" Western countries, though no one is likely to challenge their adherence to one and the same socio-economic formation.

These differences in individual countries or regions concern the degree of maturity of capitalist relations and the presence of survivals of pre-bourgeois forms, or specific features of the super-structure.

Some forms of slavery and serfdom persisted for a long time within the capitalist formation.

Unlike capitalism in the vast majority of European bourgeois states, North American capitalism had practically no residual forms of feudalism. But the presence of slave-owning relations over a long period left its definite imprint on the history and socio-economic structure of the United States. This is beyond dispute, as is the fact that there are elements of racism in modern American history. Nonetheless, the absence of feudal barriers at the crucial stage in the assertion of capitalist relations gave the US advantages over most European bourgeois countries, enabling it to overtake them economically ("the American path of capitalist development").

The dissimilarity of economic, socio-political and cultural levels of countries or regions which have more or less simultaneously entered a certain stage of the historical process, determines inner-formational differences that mainly affect the super-structure, but also the basis.

The development of the productive forces is bound to affect the overall pace of economic growth and the operation



of the objective economic laws of the given formation. This, in turn, creates conditions for certain differences in the forms of the historical process. Certain differences within one and the same antagonistic formation can be due to peculiarities of the class struggle or the organizational structure of the dominant classes.

Some authors maintain that the concrete process of history is so varied that we cannot be guided by the five-rung formula of the succession of socio-economic formations: primitive society, slave-owning society, feudalism, capitalism, communism. Reference is made, in particular, to the "diversity" of feudalism and the existence of substantial regional differences in slave-owning relations. Some orientalist maintain that the so-called "Asiatic mode of production" represents a special socio-economic formation. In fact, this was the subject of a discussion sponsored in 1965 by the USSR Academy of Sciences' Institute of Oriental Studies.<sup>14</sup> No one will, of course, deny that the term "Asiatic mode of production" occurs in the works of the founders of scientific communism. But we do not find there any comprehensive explanation of the term to enable us, first, to formulate a precise qualitative characteristic of the Asiatic mode of production as an independent socio-economic formation and, second, to delineate its territorial and temporal limits, or, in short, localise it. The discussion centered mainly on interpreting of individual pronouncements by the Marxist classics. From time to time a controversy would arise over whether or not the Asiatic mode of production should be regarded as a special socio-economic formation. So far the discussion has not yielded any conclusive results, for there is no scientifically valid proof in favour of such an "Asiatic formation", though most Marxist researchers do not deny "Asiatic forms" of social organisation.

It should be noted that there is no unity among proponents of the "Asiatic formation". Some believe that it existed during the transition to a class society and, consequently, was the first antagonistic formation. Others

believe that it existed parallel with the slave-owning societies of the West and was based on exploitation of community members by the state. Lastly, there is the view that the Asiatic mode of production existed in the so-called "new era", that is, after the 16th century, in India and China. One can agree with V. Nikiforov that this latter view is so flagrantly at odds with established facts of history that it need not be taken into account. "What the advocates of the Asiatic formation hold in common," he writes, "and what strengthens their position, and in fact, made the discussion necessary, is the inadequacy of the conceptions of the slave-owning society advanced in our literature."<sup>15</sup> Most of the direct producers in the so-called slave-owning states of Antiquity were not slaves at all, but communal farmers exploited by the despotic state. A similar situation obtained in several countries, usually classed as "early feudalism".

The Hungarian orientalist F. Tökei subscribes to the view that the Asiatic mode of production should be treated as an independent socio-economic formation. However, he hedges this off with reservations which suggest that he could accept the view that the Asiatic mode of production was but a phase, more precisely the last phase, in the disintegration of primitive society. In Tökei's reasoning, the emergence of class society (which rests on exploitation of the direct producer by a stratum or class of state officials) was complicated by the conservation of communal property and residual forms of patriarchal relations. It is therefore difficult to single out concrete class differences. And since Tökei argues that the emergence of a new social ruling stratum begins within the framework of primitive society, we can only infer that he is referring to a specific form of the disintegration of that society.<sup>16</sup>

Soviet researcher E. Loone writes: "The question of whether or not certain common features in different countries and different peoples justify their classification as a separate formation is a historical rather than philosophical question. The existence of one or another mode of

production is discovered empirically. Philosophy and methodology can only pose this question: is the concept 'formation' equally applicable to all cases (and reveal the logical contradiction of its differing usage), or does the researcher have a set of procedures to establish the meaning of the concept they apply?"<sup>17</sup>

We can, of course, return to the problem of the existence or non-existence of another socio-economic formation if new and sufficiently convincing material becomes available. But for the time being let us adhere to the traditional five-rung formula.

Nor can we put up with attempts to regard slave-owning and feudal relations as a single, integral socio-economic formation. This runs counter to all available historical evidence. As distinct from the slave-owning system, feudalism was everywhere a higher form of social organisation and had its distinctive features. The most important of these is the emergence, to a certain degree, of the possibility of property differentiation among the main, exploited productive class, the peasantry. The prerequisites are thus created for the rise of elements of new, more progressive social relations.

Opponents of the five-rung formula usually argue that there is not enough concrete historical evidence to provide a clear-cut picture of the presence of all the attributes of any of the five socio-economic formations. But history has any number of examples of "blurred" forms of socio-economic relations intrinsic in one or another type of the organisation of society. In some cases this depends on the temporary "coexistence" of economic structures—the relics of extinct formations existing side by side with the more progressive productive relations with the new, dominant structure representing the mode of production that determines the formational character of the given society.

In all cases, however, we must see the socio-economic formation as a living, developing organism passing through the natural stages of birth, growth, maturity and then decline. It is both possible and logical for formational phenomena to be manifested dissimilarly both in space and time.

The problem of formational change-over and transformation, that is, the problem of social revolution, is being intensively studied by Marxist science.

In the opinion of GDR historian W. Küttler, Marx disclosed three different aspects of this problem. The first was formulated by him in 1859 as follows: formations differ from each other by their dominant system of production relations. Second aspect, formulated in Capital: formations should be treated, in their relation to capitalism, from the standpoint of the remnants of pre-capitalist forms that persist in them. Third aspect: formations differ from each other by the type of ownership of the means of production.

Küttler writes: "It is precisely the coordinated use of these three aspects or dimensions that enables us to trace the development of formations and help solve the basic problem involved in the historical study of social formations—their sequence and replacement. Only in this way can we fully apprehend the crucial stages of historical progress and, at the same time, appreciate the contribution the different countries, regions and peoples have made to the march of history."<sup>18</sup>

The historical process is very multi-form, with a wealth of detail that comes to light in analysing socio-economic formations. At times this can make things difficult for the researcher. For instance, to this day there is controversy over the character of the social system in ancient India. Feudal relations in a number of Asian countries and Western Europe do not coincide, but their specific features do not detract from the single and law-governed process, nor from the operation of the common regularities of the given formation as a whole.

The study of the concrete specifics of each formation is the province of specialists. But above all it is necessary to solve the more general problem, namely, should different forms of one and the same stage of historical progress be grouped together, or, in other words, what are the

objective causes of non-identical, differing forms of one and the same law-governed socio-economic process in the given formation?

Formations can be studied both in terms of space (typologically), taking for our basis stable forms and regional differences through the existence of the formation, and also in terms of time, when we examine stadial differences characterising the time differential in the rise and maturity of a given formation.

And the first thing we should bear in mind is the uneven and asynchronous process of world history. Some peoples and regions, even whole continents, pass through, albeit at different times, the same stages of development. This time differential sometimes leads to the simultaneous existence of different formations. But the essence of every historical epoch is determined not by this multiplicity of social forms, but by the appearance of "shoots of the new", that is, more progressive social relations, even if at first they appear only in one country, for they set the main direction of society's forward movement. The simultaneous existence of different formations is always linked with their interaction. The external environment can have a retarding or stimulating influence on a people or region belonging to one and the same formation. This can change the concrete forms and pace of social development.

Worldwide experience has shown that external political and ideological factors can influence intra-formational processes. One need only mention the influence of world religions: Christianity, Islam, Buddhism.

At various stages of society's development, in other words, in various socio-economic formations, there come to the fore dissimilar factors that determine the uneven flow of the historical process. Thus, the more primitive the organisation of society (primitive-communal system, slave-owning society, feudalism), the greater is the influence of the natural environment. Favourable environmental conditions can accelerate the growth of the productive forces:

we have only to compare, for example, the Mediterranean countries and the land-locked continental African countries. Environmental differences make for more uneven development and in the end exert a serious influence on the forms of social relations.

The ethnic factor is important, too. A homogeneous or heterogeneous population can strongly influence the course, form and pace of socio-economic development, and create unequal conditions for the maturing of the same social phenomena. Ethnic unity is also an advantage in the sense that it tends to lessen internal conflicts. But this advantage manifests itself only at the early stages, for when bourgeois nations come into their own, the ethnic factor is relegated to the background, giving way to class relations and class conflicts.

An important theoretical problem associated with the internal modification of socio-economic formations, particularly in antagonistic societies, is that of the so-called synthesis. There is a fund of concrete historical material to show that the transition from lower to higher forms of social organisation can follow two paths.

The first is the independent, relatively free of external influences, maturing of the conditions for transition from one formation to another, higher one. And inasmuch as this is always accompanied by sharp social conflicts, that eliminate the rule of one class over another, this is a revolutionary path. Its distinguishing feature is the change of the socio-economic system as its internal contradictions reach full maturity without any external stimulation. We can therefore assume that what we have is a "pure" form of the revolutionary change of socio-economic formations. One example is Japan. Because of its relatively isolated geographical position, it was for many centuries free of serious external influences. This ensured it, among other things, ethnic unity. But more important still was that socio-economic processes developed there in total disregard of what was happening on the Asian continent.

The second path is best described by the term "synthesis". It implies, in essence, interaction and eventual merger of diverse progressive elements originating within the moribund formation with new external factors which mature in radically changing social and economic conditions. In short, the synthesis implies transition to a new formation resulting from the clash of the given society with the external environment. This can lead to the emergence of transitional forms, or to the triumph of more progressive social relations, with retention and use of "suitable" elements of the old system.

The development of countries or regions belonging to the same formation can be subject to specifics which might provoke intra-formational differences affecting not only the superstructure, but also the basis. But these differences can be of a restricted nature inasmuch as the determining factors are the dominant economic relations.

Such differences might arise as a result of discrepant levels of economic, social, political and cultural development of countries or regions which have more or less simultaneously entered their formational stage.

Differences in the level of productive forces are bound to influence not only the overall pace of economic development, but also optimal use of the objective economic laws of the given formation which, in turn, creates the conditions for a certain modification of the historical process.

In some cases the comparatively minor peculiarities existent at the initial stage in the economic and political organisation, culture and way of life, not only remain intact, but can even develop to an extent that they become responsible for a special type of organisation within the formation. However, the reverse process, the gradual leveling out of initial differences, is much more frequent.

In the past the greatest minds of humanity could only dream of "eternal peace", of an end to the wars that destroyed the results of man's creative efforts, his priceless

monuments of culture and art. The very nature of social relations in pre-communist antagonistic formations produced the objective conditions for aggressive wars, which became an inevitable and constant concomitant of such societies. The slave-owning formation could not, in general, exist without wars of conquest, attended by cruel "hunt for people". Feudal internecine strife was the "norm" of political relations in mediaeval Europe. As for the great Asiatic despotic states, their rivalry was resolved in long bloody campaigns. The first steps by bourgeois society were marked by military conflicts. The so-called trade wars and, more especially, colonial wars of aggrandisement are as old as bourgeois society. Only a relatively small part of bourgeois military actions was of a progressive nature, for it was directed against states that were the bulwark of feudal reaction. But even these wars, begun as defensive and progressive, soon became their opposites, in full conformity with the exploitative nature of bourgeois society. The Marxist classics repeatedly cited the example of the Napoleonic wars, though they began in defence of the French Republic against the feudal coalitions of Europe, they were not of a liberatory character. Quite the contrary, they degenerated into aggressive wars of conquest fully in line with the rapacious interests of the big French bourgeoisie.

The Franco-Prussian War of 1871 is still another example of how the campaign, fully justified in itself, to unite Germany in the face of opposition from Bonapartist France, degenerated into a war of conquest in which Prussian-German militarism built up its strength and directly supported the French counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie in putting down the heroic Paris Commune.

Monopoly capitalism has multiplied the aggressiveness of the imperialist bourgeoisie. Along with the numerous "local" wars, humanity was plunged into the vortex of world wars, the second of which, in scale and loss of life, has no equal in the whole of history.

This means that the acute social problems cannot be resolved within the capitalist formation. The accomplishment of tasks vital to the whole of humanity falls to the communist formation. And historical experience has demonstrated the profound humanistic nature of socialism.

Major conquests have always been a factor in the deformation of dominant socio-economic relations. Depending on concrete conditions, they have usually served to retard the progressive development of society, though in some cases they stimulated such development. It is rare, indeed, for a war of conquest to play even a limited positive role. In contrast, wars of liberation are fought to uphold progressive social and economic relations against backward political systems that hamstringing them. Such wars contribute to social progress, which sometimes finds expression in transitional forms to a new socio-economic formation that promise faster development of the productive forces.

Only the rise of fundamentally new, socialist relations--the initial phase of the communist formation--paves the way to banishing war from the life of society.

Problems relating to the emergence of the communist formation's initial phase, socialism, are of exceptional importance. Leonid Brezhnev has said in reference to these problems: "Not only are we now theoretically aware but also have been convinced in practice that the way to socialism and its main features are determined by the general regularities, which are inherent in the development of all the socialist countries. We are also aware that the effect of the general regularities is manifested in different forms consistent with concrete historical conditions and national specifics."<sup>19</sup> The unity of regularities common to all socialist countries does not preclude certain differences in the way they are manifested.

In studying the substance and forms of socialist construction, attention should be concentrated primarily on objective data characterising the state of the productive forces, economic basis and super-structure.

The socialist countries began from widely different economic levels. The German Democratic Republic, for instance, had mature technical and production requisites for building socialism. The situation was different in, say, the Mongolian People's Republic, where there was no industry of any kind.

Different industrial levels also meant a different relative weight of the working class. Its degree of organization, concentration and consciousness has a direct bearing on a country's rate of progress.

And though rapid development is part of the socialist system, the disparate starting points made for distinct differences in form and pace of implementing the totality of socialist economic and cultural transformations. Hence, development stages of the socialist countries do not coincide in time, though every country passes through them, for they are a manifestation of the regularities in building the new, socialist society.

Concrete social and economic differences between socialist countries mean different rates of revolutionary transformations. Differences at the start of the socialist revolution can be so great that eliminating them will take a very long time.

The USSR has built developed socialism and some other socialist countries are nearing that goal, but not all of them are at the same stages in completing the economic, social and cultural processes of building socialism.

These examples show that a genuine historical approach that takes into account the stages of social and economic development rests on objective data and must be strictly adhered to in every study of the socialist countries.

Partial distinctions in individual countries do not contradict the overall regularities of building socialism and communism, which are the same for all socialist countries.

Socialism, communism differ radically from the antagonistic formations based on exploitation of man by man.

This applies not only to the nature of socialism and communism, but also to the conditions of their construction. Socialism, the initial phase of the communist formation, is not formed spontaneously. The progressive social class, for the first time in world history, consciously, in a planned way, fashions new social relations, both the basis and superstructure. The dictatorship of the proletariat is the starting point of the socialist revolution and lays the foundations for the long process of planned building of the new economy and culture, transformation of the entire social structure, change of psychology, way of life and living standards.

Notwithstanding the essential differences in socio-economic levels of member countries of the socialist system, there is one thing characteristic of all of them, and this has been convincingly confirmed by the experience of history—the active and leading rôle of the political superstructure created in the course of the socialist revolution. It is decisive in creating the necessary conditions for the formation and strengthening of the new basis and for perfecting socialist relations.

Proletarian dictatorship, in whatever form, is a necessary condition for the successful building of socialism. Where the working class and its party, the revolutionary vanguard, is guided by Marxist-Leninist theory and makes full use of all the opportunities offered by proletarian dictatorship for building socialism, victory is assured. Lenin repeatedly used the formula: "Politics is a concentrated expression of economics". And inasmuch as the socialist basis is built after the working class takes power, the politics of proletarian dictatorship acquire decisive importance in the building of socialism. In Lenin's words, "politics must take precedence over economics. To argue otherwise is to forget the ABC of Marxism".<sup>20</sup> Lenin's approach to, and analysis of, politics is the very opposite of voluntarism in all its forms, which ignores the objective economic laws and absolutises force and violence in the revolutionary process.

In building socialism and communism the dialectical unity of economics and politics stands out in bold relief. Economic processes, and even more so social and cultural processes, are no longer of a spontaneous character.

Of vast importance is conscientious and planned direction of social development on the basis of cognised objective regularities. The economic integration process of the socialist countries, which expresses the objective requirements of our epoch and is based on the principles of socialist internationalism, helps to narrow the gap between the economic levels of the various countries and assures their harmonious and effective cooperation.

The existing differences between socialist countries do not affect the essence of socialist social relations. It would be a gross error to exaggerate and absolutise partial differences in the initial phase of the communist formation.

The uneven development of society and the asynchronous character of identical historical processes and events, are but a variable magnitude stemming from concrete historical conditions. As socialist relations continue to grow and strengthen on an international scale, the uneven development of society inherited from previous stages will be overcome.

In this epoch of history—the epoch of the triumph and building of the communist formation—the possibility can clearly be seen, given certain conditions, that countries with pre-bourgeois relations can bypass capitalism as a stage of social and economic development and through certain transitional stages advance to the much higher type of social relations, namely, socialism.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> V.I. Lenin, Collected Works, Moscow, Vol. 21, p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., Vol. 1, pp. 141-142.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 137-138.

<sup>4</sup> K. Marx, Capital, Vol. 3, Moscow, 1971, p. 792.

- 5 Formationstheorie und Geschichte, Berlin, 1978.
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- 8 V.I. Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 3, pp. 192-193.
- 9 F. Engels, Anti-Dühring, Moscow, 1969, p. 194.
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- 13 Marx-Engels, Selected Correspondence, Moscow, 1953, p. 565.
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## SOCIAL REVOLUTIONS

The history of mankind is a history literally abounding in revolutionary actions of different scale and significance. Their specific features and those of civil and national liberation wars, as well as of aggressive actions directed at their suppression are shaped by a given historical epoch. In order to understand the concrete nature of revolutionary actions it is necessary to compare them with a concrete epoch, with a given historical situation. Scholars constantly have to deal with contradictory facts pertaining to one or another revolutionary action. Sometimes actions that outwardly appear to be revolutionary are, in fact, an unscrupulous struggle for power by various groups of the ruling classes. The tendency to clothe actions that are anything but revolutionary in revolutionary garb, to make wide use of demagogic slogans which distort and slur over the essence of the events taking place, is well known.

At the 14th International Congress of Historical Sciences in San Francisco differences arose regarding the interpretation of the very term "revolution". A comprehensive classification of revolutions can be made only on the basis of a thorough study, first of all, of the far-ranging revolutionary actions of the masses (according to the corresponding historical epoch), and then on the basis of a detailed examination of the innumerable empirical circumstances that determined the actions. The general rule here must be that

actions not involving the broad mass of the population cannot be considered revolutionary. What motivated these masses, their real role in the movement is the key to understanding events. Not all revolutionary actions, it should be clearly realised, are necessarily positive in the sense of furthering social progress. Historical examples testify to initially progressive movements even becoming reactionary ones, or vice versa. The dialectical process of the development of revolutionary movements is a highly complex one, the correlation between their component elements is capable of changing.

A special task of historical science is to work out a typological characteristic of revolutions relating to a definite historical epoch. They can be the revolutionary actions of slaves, of the enslaved free population, the major revolutionary upheavals known in history as peasant wars. The series of bourgeois revolutions beginning with the manufactory period of capitalism and up to the consolidation of capitalist social relations merit a special study. The revolutionary actions of the working class make up an independent chapter in mankind's progressive struggle for a better future. And finally, the socialist revolutions, constituting the highest stage of the revolutionary struggle.

But in all this very complex and ramified system of revolutions, which were and remain the principal expression of the progressive activity of the popular masses, it is essential to single out the events which have become landmarks in mankind's forward movement. Reference is to revolutions which have changed the prevailing mode of production, have led to new socio-economic formations. It is precisely this category of revolutions, occupying the highest position in the hierarchy of all revolutionary actions, that are called "social revolutions".

Social revolution is a process of advance from one socio-economic formation to another. M. Seleznev distinguishes three aspects of this term: "a) social revolution in the broadest sense of the word is the transition from the lower formation to the higher; b) social revolution as a general phenomenon, as an ideal progressive leap, as a process of

transition from one formation to another finds its concrete embodiment in the diversity of individual, particular social revolutions; c) social revolution in its full scope must include a progressive leap in the development of the productive forces, production relations and the superstructure."<sup>1</sup>

Social revolutions are, to use Marx's term, the "locomotives of history" heralding the victory of new socio-economic relations over the old ones. They extend beyond local limits, are key factors in the world historical process. They are, therefore, of equal importance for understanding the historical destinies of all peoples in all continents.

Social revolutions are the determinant of mankind's forward movement. Society's transition from one socio-economic formation to another can be achieved only by a revolutionary upheaval, not by an evolutionary process.

Of course, social revolutions are not a uniform, simultaneous act. The revolutionary transition from one socio-economic formation to another is a process of deep-going political, economic and ideological changes whose forms and the pace at which they are carried out cannot be the same, since this is determined by the profound qualitative distinctions of the respective formations. The change-over of socio-economic formations is an objective and, in the final analysis, a determined process. But it does not proceed automatically. Social revolutions are the culmination of the activity of the popular masses. Their role as the makers of history most vividly manifests itself during social revolutions, when there clearly emerges the key significance of the progressive social forces, classes and parties expressing the vital demands of broad social strata and rallying them to fight for the satisfaction of these demands.

Social revolutions are always the direct result of a concrete struggle of opposing social forces.

The correlation of these forces determines both the duration and the outcome of the struggle. Lenin stressed that "Marxism differs from all other socialist theories in the remarkable way it combines complete scientific sobriety in the analysis of the objective state of affairs and the ob-



jective course of evolution with the most emphatic recognition of the importance of the revolutionary energy, revolutionary creative genius, and revolutionary initiative of the masses--and also, of course of individuals, groups, organisations, and parties that are able to discover and achieve contact with one or another class."<sup>2</sup> Lenin thus expressed with the utmost clarity the idea of the dialectic interaction, interdependence of the objective and the subjective factor in the revolutionary process.

One cannot but agree with V.Afanasyev's premise that it is essential to take into account the sliding bounds of the concepts "objective conditions" and "subjective factor". "What on the plane of general historical materialism appears as the subject, as the subjective factor can, in one or another concrete sphere of social life, appear as the object, as objective conditions."<sup>3</sup>

Throughout the history of mankind the subjective factor of social revolutions kept changing, affecting not only the content but also the forms of the revolutionary process. In some cases it appeared as a series of internally connected links but outwardly as independent revolutionary actions covering a comparatively long period of time, during which the dying socio-economic relations were destroyed and replaced by new, more progressive ones. In other cases the formation leaving the historical arena came under such heavy blows that it yielded its place in a relatively short period. Where the revolutionary activity of the masses is far ranging the degree of participation in the revolution cannot be the same for different categories and strata of the population. Alongside the vanguard, the minority, acting as the most conscious and purposeful subjective factor of social revolution its shock force can also be social strata which mostly act spontaneously and do not always have a clear idea of the concrete aims of the struggle. But without this force the revolution would be doomed to defeat.

Since every social revolution is directed at abolishing the prevailing political and economic relations it is bound to encounter bitter resistance on the part of the reactiona-

ry forces in power bent on retaining the old relations. A great concentration of effort and all means of struggle is required to overcome this resistance. The revolutionary elements can achieve victory only given their preponderance.

At the same time nearly in every social revolution casual and unstable social strata are drawn into the movement who eventually prove to be nothing but temporary "fellow-travellers". It should always be borne in mind that not only the basic classes of the given society act as the offensive or defensive forces in the revolutionary process. Although the basic classes are the chief exponents of social antagonism, the non-basic classes, like the various social strata often appearing in the political arena with their "particular" demands, can sometimes influence the general course of the movement. The peculiar ideological covering of their political position can temporarily even obscure the essence of the basic revolutionary process. And the various combinations of the heterogeneous social forces participating in the struggle can also determine, to a considerable degree, the forms of the revolutionary movement.

The diversity and extreme complexity of the processes accompanying a social revolution have prompted some authors to advance the idea of its modelling. We believe, however, that modelling conformably to invariant types of social phenomena, in particular to social revolutions, falls short of the tasks of identifying the individual features of these phenomena. Modelling presupposes the intentional creation of definite conditions of existence of the given phenomenon. But the model creates these conditions in static, not in movement, which is in irreconcilable contradiction with the very essence of historical knowledge which proceeds from the dynamism of objectively existing historical facts.

The first social revolution in the history of mankind was the transition from a classless society to a class society. The long and agonising process of the division of society into classes proceeded in a form totally unlike the usual conception of revolution. In the sharp struggle accompanying the process of the destruction of the primitive-com-

munal system and the enslavement of a considerable part of the population by the emergent social hierarchy there were no revolutionaries in the generally accepted sense of the word. A. Pershits, A. Mongait and V. Alexeyev are of a different opinion, however. They hold that when the negative role of disintegrating primitive-communal production relations, of the artificial impediment of the growth of the productive forces manifested itself, "the social forces which came out in favour of the abolition of communal ownership of the means of production and its replacement by private property, the abolition of the clan-based tribal social community and its replacement by state-political institutions, i.e., in favour of a fundamental progressive reorganisation of the social structure--those social forces were, indisputably, revolutionary forces". At the stage of the disintegration of the primitive-communal system, the said authors noted, a certain part of its members was interested in breaking away economically, in passing from clan ties to territorial ties, in the clan-based tribal community becoming a neighbour community.<sup>4</sup> Thus, not only the emergent exploiter stratum but much broader social strata wanted an end to the archaic tribal-clan system. It does not follow, of course, that this signified conscious opposition of antagonistic class relations to the clan system.

The crisis of primitive society continued for a long time. Studies on the history of archaic Greece convincingly show that the appearance of commodity-money relations undoubtedly undermined the primitive-communal system. Engels pointed out that Solon's reform which provided for the annulment of the system of mortgaging land plots and of debts which placed the debtor in servitude to the creditor, clearly had as its purpose the conservation of the primitive community.<sup>5</sup>

But no reforms could prevent the disintegration of primitive society. "All civilised peoples begin with the common ownership of the land. With all peoples who have passed a certain primitive stage, this common ownership becomes in the course of the development of agriculture a fetter on production. It is abolished, negated, and after a longer or

shorter series of intermediate stages is transformed into private property."<sup>6</sup> This observation by Engels is of great importance for understanding the economic content of that first social revolution in history which gave rise to a class-antagonistic society.

No matter in what form this society arose--as a slave-owning or as a feudal society--private property with its sundry specific features became its basis. The attempts to deny the private-property nature of feudal relations which were allegedly determined by personal ties and were, therefore, outside the decisive sphere of economic determinism, must be flatly rejected.

For all the peculiarities of mankind's transition from a primitive classless society to an antagonistic society it cannot be denied that it was a social revolution of far-ranging consequences marking a significant step along the path of social progress, of overcoming stagnation and expanding the sphere of the application of human labour (although forced labour) and thus opening up wide vistas for the further development of the productive forces.

Social revolutions ushering in the feudal formation on the ruins of the slave-owning system of relations or as a result of the disintegration of the primitive-communal system, have their specific features.

In this respect the evolution of the community is of particular interest. In historical literature the use of the category "community" has acquired an extremely broad, one might say, universal character. Not only the more or less successful attempts of the peasantry to uphold some of their rights against the feudal lords, but also their attempts to influence the formation of new bourgeois social relations and, in a certain sense, even to modify these relations are due to the stability of the community.

On the other hand, we know of the efforts of the theoreticians of Russian Narodism to see in the Russian peasant community the embryo of socialist relations, although historical experience showed the illusory nature of such assumptions. On vast concrete material Lenin disclosed the in-

evitable process of the capitalist break-up of the community. Some ideologists in the Asian and African countries view the community not in its historical development but as something permanent, stable, bearing at times even a mystic character. Arguments based on exaggeration of the stability of the communal structure are often echoed by the proponents of the "Asiatic mode of production".

Of course, it would be wrong to completely ignore the role of the community in the historical process or to minimise its significance. But any study of the community requires a concrete historical approach. This premise is of decisive importance. Nowhere did the community remain immutable. It arose, evolved under the impact of various internal and external conditions and, finally, disappeared. Any exaggeration of the community, let alone its idealisation, leads to a serious distortion of the historical process.

Reference is sometimes made to the fact that the community is present (though in various forms) in all known socio-economic formations. But what is actually meant is the presence of rudimentary relics of some archaic and social institutions, and nothing more.

The slave-owning formation did not as yet, at the stage of its disintegration, give rise to a new mode of production. But individual elements of social relations, different from slave-owning relations, began to appear relatively early. A contributing factor was the circumstance that social antagonisms were no longer confined to slave-slaveowner relations. Of enormous significance was the conflict between big and small landownership. In this conflict the ruling class of slave-owners, who represented big landownership, were opposed by a broad stratum of small landowners, legally free but systematically subjected to all kinds of coercion by the landowners of the latifundia.

The crisis in slave-owning relations, which was basically caused by the low productivity of slave labour, precipitated a series of contradictory, but nonetheless interconnected processes. The free small farmers' economy, for all its relative weakness, proved to be comparatively more pro-

ductive, even though it was exposed to the political monopoly of the big landowners maintained through social differentiation. Seeking to increase the profitability of their latifundia, the big landowners combined forced slave labour with the more profitable labour of the various groups of free and "semi-free" peasant farmers, securing at the same time their dependence in various forms. In some cases the slave-owners even allowed their slaves certain economic initiative. This led to the social position of the slaves drawing closer to those of the "free" farmers who were dependent in one way or another on the big landowners. All this eventually stimulated the contradictory and extremely slow process of crystallisation, in the bowels of slave-owning society, of such types of exploitation which were no longer "typical" of the given society and which could be regarded as a prototype of future feudal relations.

J. Herman, a Marxist historian from the GDR, examining the role of the popular masses in the history of the first antagonistic formations, believes that although one cannot speak of a "revolution of the slaves and colons which destroyed the slave-owning system", nevertheless the long struggle of the popular masses was instrumental in furthering the expansion of the economic sphere of the free and semi-free agricultural population. Thus, an offensive on the positions of the ruling class was under way, the prerequisites were being created for the abolition of the slave-owning formation. The upsurge of the mass movements, Herman stresses, often took place on the periphery of the slave-owning empire. It was precisely the periphery that began to play a major role, as a result of the mass movements, in the further development of the progressive historical process.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the emergence of objective prerequisites for a revolutionary transition from the slave-owning to the feudal formation, it could not, and did not, take place automatically. There is the saying that with the end of the slave-owning formation both classes--slaves and slave-owners--perish. This should not be taken literally, for we are dealing with the complex process of the rise of a new class structure.

Of course, a certain part of the former ruling class becomes feudal lords. Also a new large class of dependent peasants appears, formed naturally from the basic mass of direct producers, which was "inherited" from the former formation. The change in the class structure of the new society consolidates the revolutionary process under way.

The transition from one antagonistic socio-economic formation to another invariably entailed great sacrifices, cruel suffering for the broad mass of the people. The slave-owning mode of production rested on the use of the cruellest methods of compulsion. The feudal socio-economic formation, although it was based on somewhat less brutal forms of exploitation, was one of sharp class struggle and ruthless suppression of all and every form of protest by the main mass of the direct producers. Chapter XXIV of Volume I of Marx's Capital gives a stark picture of the inhuman methods whereby so-called primitive accumulation was effected. Capitalism, the bearer of social progress at that time, made its appearance in the world arena on the bones of hundreds of thousands of nameless victims.

Not a single one of the socio-economic formations can arise before the formation preceding it has exhausted the objective conditions of progressive development. We are speaking, of course, of the world historical process as a whole and not of a history of a definite region.

Although slave-owning society was the first antagonistic class formation, not all peoples passed through that stage. Feudal relations sometimes arose directly on the ruins of the archaic clan-tribal classless society. This was not, however, a departure from the principle of the historical succession of formations, for the feudal formation could not appear, and did not appear, before slave-owning relations had, in the course of the world historic process, proved their insolvency. The German tribes, which played no small part in the downfall of the slave-owning Roman Empire, were able to pass directly to feudalism only and precisely because they had already formed class relations when slave-owning society had historically exhausted itself on a world scale.

The feudal formation dominated for more than a thousand years. Despite the comparatively early signs of its disintegration, which began with the inception and development of capitalist elements in the bowels of the feudal system, its revolutionary replacement called for a long struggle.

The social revolution consolidating the capitalist system was not a simultaneous act. Lenin wrote that one can speak of the consummation of the bourgeois-democratic revolution both in the broad and in the narrow sense. Taken in the broad sense, "it means the fulfilment of the objective historical tasks of the bourgeois revolution, its 'consummation', i.e., the removal of the very soil capable of engendering a bourgeois revolution, the consummation of the entire cycle of the bourgeois revolutions. In this sense, for example, the bourgeois-democratic revolution in France was consummated only in 1871 (though begun in 1789). But if the term is used in its narrow sense, it means a particular revolution, one of the bourgeois revolutions, one of the 'waves', if you like, that batters the old regime but does not destroy it altogether, does not remove the basis that may engender subsequent bourgeois revolutions. In this sense the revolution of 1848 in Germany was 'consummated' in 1850 or the fifties, but it did not in the least thereby remove the soil for the revolutionary revival in the sixties. The revolution of 1789 in France was 'consummated', let us say, in 1794, without, however, thereby removing the soil for the revolutions of 1830 and 1848."<sup>8</sup>

In view of the unevenness of world historical development the revolutionary process connected with the change of socio-economic formations proceeds in the form of a cycle or "waves" of revolutions, to cite Lenin. They differ from each other in their different degrees of intensity, determined by the prevailing historical conditions. The cycle of bourgeois revolutions is completed, as we see from Lenin's words, only when they have fulfilled their tasks, i.e., when all the components of the capitalist socio-economic

formation have finally taken shape.

In France, the advent to power of the bourgeoisie as a result of the most radical French bourgeois revolution in 1789 destroyed the feudal order but did not as yet fully create the mature economic forms for the new, capitalist society. This required a new cycle of revolutions, each of which, irrespective of its immediate motives, made for one or another change in the development of the bourgeois system. The completion of the cycle of bourgeois revolutions in France, i.e., the full maturity of capitalist society, coincides in time with the appearance in the political arena of an inevitable concomitant and antipode--the working class.

Social revolutions are a qualitative leap in social development, separating one socio-economic formation from another. "The historical experience of social revolutions, including the experience of socialist revolutions," notes Yu. Krasin, "shows that there are no 'pure' forms of the leap. Peaceful and non-peaceful forms, gradualness and interrupted gradualness, evolution and a fundamental qualitative restructuring of social relations, reforms and revolutionary breakup--these are features and aspects inherent, in one or another proportion, in any revolution. It is on the different correlation, on the character of the connecting links of these elements that the concrete form of the revolutionary process depends."<sup>9</sup>

This does not mean, however, that the leap destroys the continuity of social development. Social revolutions leading to the transition from one socio-economic formation to another, should not be regarded as a total negation of all components without exception of the formation being replaced. What is changed radically is the mode of production and the system of socio-economic relations corresponding to it. Political power passes into the hands of new social forces. But the material means of the existence of people, such as the instruments of labour and the technical skills connected with them continue to exist. This applies to many aspects of not only material, but also spiritual culture. The

change of socio-economic formations through revolutions could not constitute the basis of society's general progress if it spelt the total negation, let alone the destruction of the material and spiritual values that have remained from the past. Of course, the character of the social revolution and the new formation it has given rise to, entirely determine to what extent the heritage of the past will be preserved and incorporated in the general values of the new society. But the continuity of civilisation is undoubtedly preserved, though in an unequal degree. The operation of the dialectical law of negation provides for a definite link between the qualitatively different stages of social development. The new society cannot be created on the basis only of the destruction of the old society. The old has to be used on a new basis.

Lenin paid special attention to the preservation and utilisation of the achievements of the material and spiritual culture of the past in the interest of the victorious socialist revolution. He clearly realised that in the conditions of the radical break-up of social relations by the revolutionary masses dangerous extremes were possible in the sense of a total negation of the bourgeois cultural heritage and its destruction. This kind of danger was particularly great in a relatively backward country with a predominantly peasant population and where rebel elements were capable of destroying everything connected in one way or another with the pre-revolutionary past. The class consciousness of the revolutionary proletariat, its high degree of organisation and discipline were the conditions needed for curbing those dangerous tendencies that had surfaced among the unprepared peasant masses bent on "settling scores" for the long years of injustice, oppression and exploitation that had been their lot.

Lenin said in the early years of the socialist revolution that "the task of combining the victorious proletarian revolution with bourgeois culture, with bourgeois science and technology, which up to now has been available to few people, is a difficult one. Here, everything depends on the

organisation and discipline of the advanced sections of the working people."<sup>10</sup> He particularly stressed the necessity of building a communist society which could be built only on the basis of the complete assimilation of the cultural heritage of the past. "If, in Russia, the millions of downtrodden and ignorant peasants who are totally incapable of independent development, who were oppressed by the landowners for centuries, did not have at their head, and by their side an advanced section of the urban workers whom they understood, with whom they were intimate, who enjoyed their confidence, whom they believed as fellow-workers, if there were not this organisation which is capable of rallying the masses of the working people, of influencing them, of explaining to them and convincing them of the importance of the task of taking over the entire bourgeois culture, the cause of communism would be hopeless."<sup>11</sup>

Marxist literature contains sufficient substantiation of the viewpoint that the transition period as a definite historical category exists only when society advances from capitalism to socialism, for socialist production relations cannot arise in the bowels of bourgeois society. Hence, some time is needed before these relations can take shape after the establishment of the political power of the victorious working class and with the most active assistance of the state of proletarian dictatorship.

The question naturally arises: was there any transition period between other socio-economic formations? The main objection to such an assumption is that in other socio-economic formations the newly arisen production relations had evolved mainly in the shape of corresponding structures, in the bowels of the old formation that was leaving the historical scene. In all social organisms (except the most archaic clan-tibial system) preceding socialist society only the forms of already existing exploitation were changed leaving the continuity of the antagonistic character of social relations intact. This is borne out by numerous examples from history confirming, for instance, the long coexistence of newly arisen bourgeois relations with feudal-serf and even slave-owning relations.

And yet, despite the above arguments, it must be admitted that when examining the process of the progressive change of all the successive socio-economic formations we can discern a definite transition phase, although different from the capitalism-to-socialism transition period.

The main common feature of these transition phases is the incompleteness of the development and consolidation of the basis and superstructure categories of the new formation. The high proportion of the more archaic social forms still preserved--in many cases accompanying the revolution--hampers, or at any rate, retards the new formation fully taking shape. The appropriate period for doing away with the old can be a comparatively long one. In some cases it abounds in sharp clashes between the new and the old, even in revenge-seeking attempts by the remnants of the former formations to reverse the course of history. The transition period from the primitive-communal system to a class society comes to an end with the de jure and de facto subordination or enslavement of the main mass of community members by the ruling class of the slave-owners or of the feudal lords. In the same way, the transition period from feudalism to capitalism comes to an end with the triumph of bourgeois property relations, which override and transform the pre-capitalist forms of exploitation. Marx established the fact of the existence of such a transition period: "When capital--not any kind of definite capital, but capital in general--is only still forming, the process of its formation is a process of the disintegration and a product of the collapse of the social mode of production preceding it. Hence, it is a historical process and a process belonging to a definite historical period. It is the period of its historical genesis."<sup>12</sup>

The existence of a transition period does not change the revolutionary (and not the evolutionary) character of the replacement of one socio-economic formation by another. The victory of new social relations cannot be achieved without violence although its role and scale in a revolutionary upheaval are determined by a concrete historical situation.

A feature of the initial phase of any social revolution, including a socialist revolution, is particularly desperate forms of the class struggle, for it involves storming the ramparts of the old society, crushing the resistance of the outgoing exploiter classes and clearing the way to building new, progressive social relations. Marx always recognised the role of violence as the "midwife" of history. But the revolutionary working class has never idealised and never absolutised purely forcible methods of struggle. Lenin's negative attitude to the idea of artificially imposing "blessings" on the peoples, is well known.<sup>13</sup>

The classics of scientific socialism repeatedly expressed the view that although the revolutionary working class must be prepared to repulse the reactionary forces in defence of its gains, it must not be the initiator of forcible means of struggle. If the reactionary classes had not resorted to violence, the working class would not have resorted to arms.

Unfortunately, historical experience has up to now practically everywhere disproved the assumption that the exploiter classes are capable of reconciling themselves to the possibility of redeeming their privileges voluntarily. Every attempt, even the slightest, to restrict the rule of the exploiter classes, has, as a rule, led to bloodshed. Still the historical tendency is that the revolutionary process in the period of the transition from capitalism to socialism, when the international working class grows in numbers and strength, is not necessarily connected with violence inevitably leading to bloody civil wars. Whether the social upheaval will entail human sacrifices or not depends upon the character of the resistance to the revolutionary process on the part of the reactionary classes leaving the historical arena.

Civil and national liberation wars which the revolutionary proletariat always supports, proceeding from its internationalist principles, are not contrary to its anti-war positions. Civil war is the most acute manifestation of the class struggle in which the exploited society seeks the abo-

lition of the domination of the exploiter minority. Civil war, the proletariat versus the bourgeoisie, is an expression of the operation of the objective laws of social development, an effective driving force of the social process. The victory of the revolutionary working class over the reactionary bourgeoisie has as its aim, in the final analysis, not only the social liberation of the working people but also their deliverance from the militarist machine, the suppression of chauvinism, the isolation, the curbing or destruction of the anti-popular forces who are a constant source of aggressive, predatory wars bringing incalculable misfortune and suffering to the peoples. Unjust, aggressive wars are an indispensable concomitant of capitalism, intrinsic in its social nature. It therefore follows that the only guarantee of putting an end to such wars is the victory of socialist social relations on an international scale. Imperialist propaganda's assertion that the socialist states' peace policy is allegedly incompatible with their policy of rendering assistance to the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat and to the national liberation movements is untenable, false and hypocritical.

Incitement to civil wars in foreign territories, any direct or indirect instigation of the proletariat of other countries to overthrow the power of the exploiter classes by force are features totally alien to the socialist countries which adhere to the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states. But while decisively rejecting "export of revolution", the socialist states cannot remain indifferent to the destiny of the international proletarian revolutionary movement. A civil war of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie cannot but evoke sympathy and a natural desire to lend support to the revolutionary forces. Such support does not imply state interference except in cases when there is a threat of the imperialist "export of counter-revolution". Armed intervention by some power which seeks by force to suppress the insurgent working class in another country, essentially changes the nature of a civil war. Outside aggression launched with a view to crushing revolutionary forces is in effect directed against the

sovereign right of the people to decide their own destiny, to choose their political and social system. In such cases the civil war of the proletariat assumes an all people's character. The socialist countries, in no way departing from their basic policy, have the right to render assistance in repulsing foreign aggression and preventing the "export of counter-revolution". This applies also to the national liberation wars which the oppressed peoples are compelled to wage against the imperialist colonialists.

Revolutions take place as a result of the aggravation of the internal social antagonisms inherent in the given society. The essence of the revolutionary process under way in one or another country cannot be understood without an understanding of the internal socio-economic and political causes underlying it. Every revolution, of course, experiences, to one extent or another, the impact of external factors which can have either a stimulating or obstructive effect on the revolutionary process, can further or impede its development. But in no case can the external factor be the initial cause of revolution. Historical experience at the same time offers numerous instances of military support from the outside rendered by class forces in solidarity with revolutionary actions in other countries, and just as many instances of attempts to crush such actions by whole coalitions of states united by their common counter-revolutionary aims.

It is but natural that the socialist states should render assistance to the peoples fighting for their independence against colonialism. Such assistance is necessary and its effectiveness is proved by historical facts. Colonial exploitation, national and racial oppression not only bring incalculable suffering to the enslaved peoples, doom them to starvation, and even extinction, obstruct their progressive development; they are also constant sources of international conflicts and wars. Historical experience is rich in examples showing what dangerous seats of war arose where the imperialists carried out direct or indirect seizures, encroached upon the natural resources and other national wealth of other countries.

No matter in what form the colonialist policy is pursued it is always aimed at consolidating the positions of the most reactionary social forces, at intensifying exploitation and encouraging aggression. Colonialism alienates the working people of different nations, divides them and sets on each other, spreads chauvinistic and racist views. Lenin repeatedly cited Marx's words that "no nation can be free if it oppresses other nations".<sup>14</sup>

The various assumptions by bourgeois ideologists that the Bolsheviks allegedly for a time recognised war as a means of revolutionary influence on other nations are completely disproved by the experience of the struggle Lenin waged against the so-called "left Communists". He consistently adhered to and further developed Marx's and Engels's tenet that objective economic stimuli, furnishing the force of example, are the main means of spreading revolution. "Once Europe is reorganised, and North America," Engels wrote, "that will furnish such colossal power and such an example that the semi-civilised countries will of themselves follow in their wake; economic needs, if anything, will see to that."<sup>15</sup> He did not express any definite views as to what social and political phases the "semi-civilised countries", i.e., the countries still at a low level of capitalist development, would have to pass through before arriving at socialist organisation. Engels stressed that the active leading role of the working class was to lead the colonial countries to independence as rapidly as possible. He pointed out that this process would not be an easy one, "it would not pass off without all sorts of destruction, of course, but that sort of thing is inseparable from all revolutions."<sup>16</sup>

It should be underlined once again that Marxism-Leninism has always resolutely condemned predatory wars, including colonial wars, an inevitable concomitant of capitalism.

In the "Inaugural Address of the Working Men's International Association", written by Marx in 1864, the predatory foreign policy of the bourgeoisie "in pursuit of criminal design, playing upon national prejudices and squandering



in piratical wars the people's blood and treasure" is opposed by a proletarian foreign policy whose task is "to vindicate the simple laws of morals and justice, which ought to govern the relations of private individuals, as the rules paramount of the intercourse of nations.

"The fight for such a foreign policy forms part of the general struggle for the emancipation of the working classes."<sup>17</sup>

Socialist revolutions differ fundamentally from other social revolutions not only in content but also in form. Lenin elaborated an integral theory of socialist revolution the correctness of which has been fully borne out by historical experience, by revolutionary practice. In the report of the CC CPSU to the 25th Congress of the CPSU Leonid Brezhnev defined the process of the building of a communist society as a social revolution.<sup>18</sup> This fully accords with the Marxist-Leninist understanding of the essence of social revolution or the transition from one socio-economic formation to another.

The completion of the relatively long phase of the existence and development of a mature socialist society, on the basis of which a communist society is being built, will signify the definitive emergence of the communist formation.

The distinctive feature of this great social revolution is that it triumphs not as a result of the struggle of antagonistic classes, since such no longer exists in a developed socialist society. Under way now is not a spontaneous, but the regulated process of improving advanced socialist social relations and their systematic development into communist relations.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> M.A.Seleznev, Social Revolution, Moscow, 1971, p.252 (in Russian).

<sup>2</sup> V.I.Lenin, Collected Works, Moscow, Vol.13, p.36.

<sup>3</sup> V.Afanasyev, Scientific Management of Society, Moscow, 1968, p.117 (in Russian).

- <sup>4</sup> A.Pershits, A.Mongait, V.Alexeyev, A History of Primitive-Communal Society, Moscow, 1968, p.159 (in Russian).
- <sup>5</sup> K.Marx, F.Engels, Selected Works, Vol.3, Moscow, 1970, p.281.
- <sup>6</sup> F.Engels, Anti-Dühring, Moscow, 1969, p.165.
- <sup>7</sup> Introductory article by J.Herman in the book: Die Rolle der Volksmassen in der Geschichte der Vorkapitalistischen Gesellschaftsformation, Ed. by J.Herman and G.Sellnow, Berlin, 1975.
- <sup>8</sup> V.I.Lenin, Collected Works, Vol.16, pp.202-203.
- <sup>9</sup> Leninism and Philosophical Problems Today, Moscow, 1970 (in Russian).
- <sup>10</sup> V.I.Lenin, Collected Works, Vol.29, p.74.
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp.74-75.
- <sup>12</sup> K.Marx, F.Engels, Works, 2nd edition, Vol.26, Part III, p.516 (in Russian).
- <sup>13</sup> V.I.Lenin, Collected Works, Vol.22, p.352.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid., Vol.21, p.104.
- <sup>15</sup> K.Marx, F.Engels, Selected Works, Vol.3, p.481.
- <sup>16</sup> Ibidem.
- <sup>17</sup> K.Marx, F.Engels, Selected Works, Vol.2, p.18.
- <sup>18</sup> L.I.Brezhnev, Report of the CPSU Central Committee and the Immediate Tasks of the Party in Home and Foreign Policy. 25th Congress of the CPSU, Moscow, 1976, p.56.

## THE DIVISION OF HISTORY INTO PERIODS (The Periodisation of History)

The problem of the periodisation of world history has long attracted attention from historians and sociologists. There is no need to prove the complexity of the problem and, at the same time, its vast significance to historical science as a whole: the periodisation of the historical process gives a better understanding of that process, facilitates a comprehension of its inner law-governed patterns, and consequently makes it possible to draw a scientific generalisation. It would be hard to find a historian who, whatever his subjective methodological view, would give up the idea of periodisation. However, it is common knowledge that a wide variety of views exists among historians on the question of a scientific criterion of world history's periodisation, especially among those who on the whole adhere to idealistic stands.

The very concept of "world history" has given rise to certain differences or shades of opinion. By "world history" we understand the road travelled by mankind as a whole. World history is called upon to provide a summarising but in no way abstract notion of the development of human society and its advance from lower stages to higher ones. World history means the history of all peoples. In such a formulation, the subject of world history cannot, of course, be limited to any conventional and mostly arbitrarily selected ethnic or

cultural and historical complexes, "civilisations". It is sufficiently well known that, in hoary antiquity and in periods closer to us, vast masses of people lived beyond the pale of comparatively better studied cultural and historical complexes. The overall course of world history cannot be understood if one disregards the fortunes of that part of mankind which developed outside the traditional "civilisations". One will rarely find, in present-day literature, so obvious an anachronism as the division of peoples into "historical" and "non-historical", but the trend, linked with such a division, to classify peoples according to their belonging to known to us (or even invented!) "cultural complexes" and "civilisations" is surprisingly tenacious of life.

Soviet historians are aware that, at the given level of the availability of sources, it is difficult in practice to establish, in all its outstanding details, the historical road travelled by all peoples. However, Soviet historical science is working towards an ascertainment of the actual role played by each people in the world-historical process, and has rejected all and every subjective preferences for any particular ethnic group. One cannot write or understand the real history of human society without eschewing the subjectivist predilection to substitute the history of states and religions for the history of peoples, the subject of historical studies. To present as world history the history of religions or civilisations that have been arbitrarily selected by the scholar is just as unscientific as to insist on the outmoded geocentric theory of the universe.

Historical science is unthinkable without a periodisation of the historical process. Periodisation defines the very essence, the essential content of the stages in the emergence and development of historical processes characteristic of a given people, country, region, or mankind as a whole.<sup>1</sup>

There can be no genuine historical science without a periodisation of history, i.e., without a generalising approach to history. A recognition of the overall law-governed

patterns in the development of human society is the foundation of a scientific periodisation of world history.

Mankind has existed for over two million years, with pre-class society being the lengthiest in time, involving many tens of millennia. The primitive-communal system was the first progressive epoch in world history, whose emergence and development proceeded at an extremely slow rate in the conditions of immature productive forces and primitive technology. Without any exception, all the peoples inhabiting our planet went through this initial stage in the development of society. However, that system was not absolutely uniform in type, and its development was neither smooth nor simultaneous.

Wherever the natural conditions favoured man's labour, the objective preconditions arose earlier than elsewhere for certain surpluses to appear over and above what was immediately consumed. Some surpluses were formed artificially, as a result of military plunder. Thus, in a number of regions, the conditions appeared objectively promoting the gradual emergence of a social upper crust which initially merely controlled, on behalf of society, the accumulated social wealth, but then took to appropriating that wealth and contravening itself to society. Thousands of years were needed for society to become divided into classes.

The slave-owning social system was the first form of class society and consequently the second progressive epoch in the overall development of mankind. The first states--and these were slave-owning states--appeared amidst a vast number of tribes standing at various stages in the development of primitive-communal relations. The armed struggle against such tribes was a major source of acquiring slaves from among the captives. The very emergence of slave-owning states and then the more rapid rate of economic and cultural development in slave-owning societies had a vast and ever mounting influence on the far more backward but numerically bigger tribes, which in their turn also exerted an influence on the slave-owning states. The transition from the primitive-communal system to a class society, which was a gigantic leap forward in world social development, was re-

volutionary in character and was accompanied by an acute struggle embracing whole centuries. The slave-owners had to impose their supremacy by force.

Slavery existed practically everywhere, though in various forms and not always reaching the level of a developed socio-economic formation. Besides, even those tribes which had not achieved the stage of a class society but experienced the powerful impact of neighbouring slave-owning states began to reveal an extensive development of patriarchal form of slavery.

It should be emphasised that the inhabitants of the slave-owning states did not consist only of slave-owners and slaves. Besides, these basic classes in the first antagonistic society, there was a considerable part of the inhabitants, and in many cases the majority representing the free landholders, who continued to adhere to the communal forms which they were constantly defending against encroachments by the slave-owners. Enslavement, that most primitive and forcible form of exploitation, met with fierce resistance, not only from the communal freemen but also from tribes that lived on the periphery of the slave-owning states and were constant objects of campaigns of conquest by the slave-owners.

Though relations of slave-ownership arose at different times and did not become universally predominant, the slave-owning social system was an important progressive stage in mankind's development. On a hitherto unparallel scale, the new relations of production expanded the sphere of the application of labour and consequently created conditions for the development of the productive forces.

The transition from slave-ownership to feudalism, just like the transition from the primitive-communal system to slave or feudal society, could not and was not uniform and simultaneous. In general, it was impossible before the slave-owning system had outlived itself economically and the objective conditions matured for the replacement of slave labour by the more productive labour of dependent tillers of the soil.

For a lengthy period of time, clashes between opposing class interests did not lead to any decisive results. Indeed, the struggle was an extremely lengthy one and there temporarily coexisted, on big territories, various socio-economic systems such as the primitive-communal, the slave-owning and the feudal.

The establishment of feudal relations instead of slave-ownership meant the replacement of some exploiters by others and the subjugation of the vast mass of the population to new, feudal exploitation. Nevertheless, the feudal society was a considerable step forward as against the slave society, the productive forces being given a new and powerful impetus. Fresh prospects appeared for further advances in land cultivation and handicrafts. Industrial production was making its way, which revealed, in the measure of its spread, the big advantages of wage labour over the exploitation of the labour of slaves or serfs.

Like the slave system, the feudal system was marked by a variety of concrete forms and manifestations conditioned by local features. This overall characteristic was complicated by the unequal blending, in various countries, of feudal relations both with survivals of previous socio-economic systems (primitive-communal or slave relations) and embryonic forms of future capitalist relations.

Feudal society yielded place to capitalism, which was born and matured within the feudal system. It stands to reason that the victory of the capitalist mode of production could not come about at one and the same time. The initial forms of capitalist relations came to the fore in the towns of Italy in the 13th and 14th centuries. The Netherlands revolution of the 16th century took the form of a popular struggle against foreign rule, but had deep socio-economic roots: the development of capitalist relations. The mid-17th century saw the bourgeois revolution in England. Though based on compromise, it prepared the triumph of a new bourgeois order. Finally, the French Revolution of the end of the 18th century ushered in an historic phase of the liquidation of feudalism and the triumph of capitalism. While the downfall

of the slave-owning system was spontaneous and unorganised, the bourgeois revolutions were made by the masses, who came out against the bulwarks of feudalism with their own political programmes, their parties and their own organisations. It is noteworthy that the masses who represented the main driving force in bourgeois revolutions, could not as a rule reap the benefits of their effort, which went to a comparatively small upper crust who were out to restrict the aims set by the revolution to a single aim, i.e., the elimination of all obstacles to private enterprise. If that aim could be achieved through compromise with the feudal lords, the big bourgeoisie were most willing to make such a compromise and unhesitatingly sacrificed the interests of the masses, whose fate was of little concern to them.

The active involvement of the peasantry, especially in Germany and England, made it possible to strike blows at the feudal reactionaries, something that the bourgeoisie itself was incapable of doing. But it was against the interests of the masses, including the peasantry, that the immediate results of the revolution proved objectively directed. Following the defeat in the Great Peasant War, the German peasants were mercilessly crushed and subjugated. A hundred years after Cromwell, the English yeomanry had almost disappeared, while the French peasants, who had fallen victims to the parcelling of the land and besides, had been bled white in Napoleon's campaigns, proved to be stripped of all and any economic independence.

The revolutionary spirit of the bourgeoisie reached its peak in the French Revolution which, however, showed, first, that the people, i.e., the urban plebs and the peasants, formed the backbone of the revolutionary armies; they were the main revolutionary force that ensured the accomplishment of anti-feudal tasks; second, already in the course of the revolutionary events, there took place a bifurcation, a divergence, between the interests of the bourgeoisie and those of the people; third, the forerunners of the present-day proletariat had already formulated their own interests which were distinct from the bourgeoisie's, and, fourth, after achieving their aims in the revolution, with the help

of the people, the bourgeoisie hastened to cut short the revolutionary process and strip the revolution of its leadership. The Restoration of 1660 and the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688 in England accomplished social tasks in the same way as the Thermidor events and the accession of Napoleon Bonaparte did in France.

Though the era of capitalism led to a rapid upsurge in the productive forces and to outstanding progress in science, technology and culture, that advance went hand in hand with an exceptionally sharp exacerbation of internal contradictions. Capitalism triumphed as a result of several revolutions separated from one another by centuries, while the revolution of 1848, one of the last, coincided immediately with the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat against capitalism.

The first proletarian revolution took place in France in 1871 but it did not and could not triumph, since bourgeois society had not yet exhausted all its possibilities. Despite their heroism, the Paris Communards lacked a revolutionary vanguard--its own party, and could not ensure guidance of the peasantry and give leadership to the non-proletarian sections of the people. Nevertheless, the Paris Commune will always remain a landmark in world history.

A new era set in when capitalism entered its imperialist phase. In 1905, the Russian proletariat headed the people's revolution, which had its repercussions in all continents. This was the first revolution in world history in which the working class, guided by an advanced party, assumed the role of leader of the broad masses, in the first place, the whole peasantry, in the struggle against semi-feudal and capitalist exploitation. The 1905-1907 revolution was defeated, first and foremost, because revolutionary action by the workers and peasants was not united in a single current but took place at different times, which allowed the reactionaries to muster all their forces and crush the movement. However, the revolution of 1905-1907, a world-wide historic event, had an immediate impact on the destinies of the peoples of Europe and Asia, for it was the threshold to the Great Socialist Revolution in Russia in October 1917.

The successive replacement of socio-economic formations--the primitive communal, slave-owning, feudal, capitalist and the communist formation--comprise the objective foundation and theoretical basis for the periodisation of the historical process.

The scientific periodisation of history took initial shape in an early work by the founders of scientific socialism--The German Ideology (1845-1846), in which the stages in the historical development of society are defined as successive forms of ownership: the tribal, the antique, the feudal, and the bourgeois. It stated for the first time that the periodisation of the entire historical process is based on economic history, the stages in the development of material production. In 1859, this proposition was amended by an important qualification: "The productive forces determine relations of production" (Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy), where direct reference is made to what is called an "economic formation of society". It follows therefrom that the reference is to historically definite stages in the development of society.<sup>2</sup> As Karl Marx wrote in the Preface to the first edition of Volume I of Capital: "My standpoint, from which the evolution of the economic formation of society is viewed as a process of natural history".<sup>3</sup>

As is common knowledge, Marx took a deep interest in geology, from which he borrowed the term "formation" to determine the gigantic strata in the history of mankind which can be distinguished according to the historical succession in their emergence and replacement. An example of his use of this geological term can be found in the second draft of a letter to Vera Zasulich (1881): "The archaic, or primary formation of the globe consists of a series of strata of various periods, of which some were superimposed on others. In exactly the same way, the archaic social formation opens up to us a number of various stages which mark a succession of epochs that replace each other...." Further, in the third draft of the letter, Karl Marx speaks of the secondary formation that involves three periods of development: slave-owning, feudal and bourgeois society.<sup>4</sup> These variants of

Marx's letters to Vera Zasulich were never sent off, the writer evidently not considering his considerations complete. However, considerable interest lies in the fact that Karl Marx--as is borne out by the contemporary achievements of archaeology and ethnography--regarded pre-class society, which in this case he called the "archaic or primary" formation, as a very lengthy and vast historical period divisible into individual epochs.

The problem of periodisation is all the more complex because of the difficulty of establishing a single criterion to meet the need both for a substantiated division of the world-historical process and of regional or local histories. What is beyond doubt is that the theory of socio-economic formations is, in all cases, a most important guideline in the approach to the scientific periodisation of history. At the same time, it should be taken into account that the succession of socio-economic formations does not proceed simultaneously, and consequently the social revolutions which give it concrete shape take place at different historical times. Following the most lengthy period of the existence of the primitive communal system--that primary and universal socio-economic formation--and already with the appearance of slave-ownership there set in the simultaneous functioning of two or more social formations. That is why the underlying principle of social formations calls for a certain augmentation of the periodisation of the world-historical process.

In this respect, use of the concept "historical epoch" is the most convenient. Lenin, who made frequent use of this concept, gave it a profound scientific substantiation. Thus, in the article "Under a False Flag" he wrote: "We are undoubtedly living at the juncture of two epochs, and the historic events that are unfolding before our eyes can be understood only if we analyse, in the first place, the objective conditions of the transition from one epoch to the other. Here we have important historical epochs; in each of them there are and will always be individual and partial movements, now forward now backward; there are and will always be various deviations from the average type and mean tempo of the movement. We cannot know how rapidly and how success-

fully the various historical movements in a given epoch will develop, but we can and do know which class stands at the head of one epoch or another, determining its main content, the main direction of its development, the main characteristics of the historical situation in that epoch, etc. Only on that basis, i.e., by taking into account, in the first place, the fundamental distinctive features of the various 'epochs' (and not single episodes in the history of individual countries) can we correctly evolve our tactics; only a knowledge of the basic features of a given epoch can serve as the foundation for an understanding of the specific features of one country or another."<sup>5</sup> Thus, Lenin emphasised that a definition of a historical epoch should be grounded in an objective class approach, which cannot depend on the way the overall historical process is modified in individual countries. The borderlines of an epoch are established within an international framework. An epoch gives expression to the typical social processes in which a particular social class assumes the role of a leading and determining force. In imparting a concrete content to the concept of epoch, and in establishing the trend of social development inherent in a given epoch, Lenin at the same time constantly cautioned against simplification, a stereotype approach to the characteristic of an epoch. "... An epoch," he said, "is a sum of varied phenomena, in which, in addition to the typical, there is always something else."<sup>6</sup>

A historical epoch is in no way a logical abstraction. It takes in the sum of varied phenomena and processes, both typical and non-typical, great and small, and peculiar to both advanced and backward countries. In an article entitled "The Military Programme of Proletarian Revolution", Lenin wrote about the war of 1914-1918: "The present imperialist war is the continuation of the imperialist policies of two groups of Great Powers, and these policies were engendered and fostered by the sum total of the relationships of the imperialist epoch. But this very epoch must also necessarily engender and foster policies of struggle against national oppression and of proletarian struggle against the bourgeoisie and, consequently, also the possibility and inevita-

bility, first, of revolutionary national rebellions and wars; second, of proletarian wars and rebellions against the bourgeoisie; and, third, of a combination of both kinds of revolutionary war, etc."<sup>7</sup> That is why the imperialist epoch is sometimes defined as "an epoch of wars and proletarian revolutions".

The Leninist understanding of an historical epoch contains a definition of a leading trend in social development and a definition both of the classes that stand at the hub of the historical process and give direction to its advance and the class forces that stand in opposition to each other. The historical process is examined, not in an abstract fashion but in the totality of the concomitant concrete phenomena.

Highly important in principle are Lenin's words that, in a determination of the concrete borderlines between one historical epoch and another, these should not be absolutised. "Here, of course, as everywhere in Nature and society, the lines of division are conventional and variable, relative, not absolute."<sup>8</sup> This proposition is directed against a dogmatic striving to periodise the historical process almost by the day and hour, and to absolutise the significance of concrete historical dates, this ultimately leading to an oversimplified understanding of history.

The concept "historical epoch" is indissolubly linked with the Marxist-Leninist theory of the progressive succession of socio-economic formations. One cannot speak of any historical epoch in the abstract from the socio-economic formations existing in that epoch. An historical epoch is defined as a lengthy historical phase that is marked by more or less stable interrelations between two or more coexistent socio-economic formations. The chronological framework of an historical epoch hinges on the radical changes in the alignment of forces between such formations. Every epoch is marked by a dominant trend in the development of society, this finding expression in the progressive consolidation and mounting relative weight of a more advanced socio-economic formation.

The dynamism of the historical process finds expression, not only in a change in the alignment of forces between various formations but also in substantial changes within each formation. Since they all go through various stages of maturity, development and decline, this cannot but exert an influence on the historical epoch in question. The result is a need to distinguish, within every historical epoch, the individual periods that reflect its internal development.

The present historical epoch, which is marked by the revolutionary transition from capitalism to socialism, also contains individual periods that correspond to the growth stages and the mounting impact of socialism on world development.

Consequently, every historical epoch can have its own internal divisions. It goes without saying, that the periodisation of world history calls for extensive preliminary research, especially in respect of those distant times when regions were far more isolated from one another and the interaction between various formations was less felt than in later times. Prior to world history becoming an "empirical fact", i.e., the emergence of the world system of capitalist economy, the history of mankind was, as it were, "split" into various self-contained areas, where internal socio-economic processes matured autonomously.

The farther we dip into the past, the more difficult it proves to provide a more or less precise dating of historical processes and phenomena. This is especially true of the social revolutions which brought about the transition from non-class to class society, and then from the slave-owning system to feudalism. In the former instance, the revolutionary process was lengthy and largely spontaneous and it is only with a certain degree of approximation that one can determine its spatio-temporal borderlines.

The concept of historical epoch as grounded in the theory of socio-economic formations makes it possible to periodise history on a global scale. However, what is necessary alongside an overall periodisation of the world-historical process is a scientific elaboration of the local

periodisation of history. An intimate link cannot but exist between the two, for both are ultimately determined by the overall law-governed patterns in the progressive advance of society, i.e., again by the progressive succession of socio-economic formations. The operation of these patterns can be traced in the development of all regions and even individual countries without exception, but the concrete historical timing for individual regions or countries to achieve equal degrees in the overall progressive movement is not the same, as a rule. The solution is to be seen in the establishment of a system of the "hierarchical" dependence of purely local historical phenomena on the regional, while the latter, in their turn, on the more general ones, which find expression in the qualitative features of an historical epoch. In a work on the history of a particular country or people, it is possible and necessary to determine concrete landmarks in the local historical process, proceeding from the inner logic of that process. Such localised periodisation is, as it were, the lowest stage in the general system. The next and higher stage is provided by facts that characterise the historical development of an entire region with appropriate chronological links. A comparison of dates testifying to similar processes, this on a purely local and regional scale, makes it possible to establish the greater or lesser degree of interdependence between these processes and permits mapping out an outline of a single periodisation involving both the region as a whole and its component elements. Finally, the data obtained in this way are, as it were, superimposed on the objective material that provides the groundwork of the world-historical periodisation. This permits establishing the place held by a particular region in a concrete historical epoch. Thus, the researcher is enabled to approach the establishment of the degree of the impact exerted by the overall world historical process on the fate both of a given region and the purely local elements that enter it. Of course, the ascertainment of a definite "resultant" is conventional in its nature. But any periodisation cannot but be approximate and conventional. Major historical processes and phenomena cannot be dated with absolute precision. What is more important is to

establish, even in the approximation, the dependence of local historical processes on the overall trend of social development as expressing the fundamental law-governed pattern in mankind's advance. In a number of cases, one can speak of historical epochs, proceeding from the external conditions in the development of individual regions as determining the direction of their inner evolution. Thus, for example, the primitive marginal area of class societies--the extensive zone of the Euro-Asiatic continent--was, from ancient times, an arena of clashes between different class-ethnic formations, civilisations, mostly in forms of gross violence--conquest and plunder--with the concomitant destruction of the productive forces.<sup>9</sup> The history of the peoples of the American and African continents proceeded amidst the same conflicts, although in a somewhat different fashion, in the pre-colonial period.

In Soviet historiography, the English bourgeois revolution of the 17th century is considered the starting point of "modern history". This periodisation is grounded in the English revolution being the first victory of bourgeois relations over the feudal in one of Europe's leading countries. It was thus that the English revolution ushered in the epoch of a revolutionary transition from the feudal formation to the capitalist. Consequently, we see here the operation of the formation principle as a criterion of historical periodisation, but we cannot preclude other variants of the solution of this problem. Without infringing on the above-mentioned principle of social formation, we can also recognise as the onset of the epoch of transition from feudalism to capitalism either the earlier Netherlands Revolution of the 16th century or else the later French Revolution of the 18th century.

The American Revolution of the 18th century, which preceded the French Revolution, was in the main anti-colonialist and played no independent role from the viewpoint of the formation approach.

A definition of the English Revolution of the 17th century as the starting point of the epoch of modern history



cannot be absolutised either. Like all chronological landmarks in the development of society, it is conventional, for all three possible variants of the starting point of the new epoch have the right to exist inasmuch as they do not infringe on the principle of social formations. At the same time, there are certain weighty arguments in favour of the variant accepted in Soviet historiography.

England played a very important role in Europe's political life, far more than the Netherlands. Karl Marx considered it a "classical country" of the capitalist mode of production. In the Preface to the first edition of Capital, he wrote: "The physicist either observes physical phenomena where they occur in their most typical form and most free from disturbing influence, or, wherever possible, he makes experiments under conditions that assure the occurrence of the phenomenon in its normality. In this work I have to examine the capitalist mode of production, and the conditions of production and exchange corresponding to that mode. Up to the present time, their classic ground is England. That is the reason why England is used as the chief illustration in the development of my theoretical ideas."<sup>10</sup>

When the revolution was completed, England was already a major colonial power whose influence extended far beyond the borders of Europe. Besides, because of its compromise nature, the English Revolution may be considered as the starting point of the epoch of struggle waged by emergent bourgeois relations against the practically universal feudal relations. The compromise nature of the English Revolution was manifested mainly in the sphere of the superstructure. Karl Marx emphasised that, "wherever the conditions handed down from history were at variance with, or did not correspond to, the requirements of capitalist production on the land, they were ruthlessly swept away; this applies not only to the position of the village communities but to the village communities themselves, not only to the habitats of the agricultural population but to the agricultural population itself, not only to the original centres of cultivation, but to cultivation itself."<sup>11</sup>

The French bourgeois revolution, which dealt most radically with the feudal order of things, was not the beginning but rather the crest of the new historical epoch on reaching which the bourgeoisie quite rapidly shed its revolutionariness.

Undoubtedly, most of the countries that were relatively more economically developed (though still feudal) already saw, in the 17th century, and at places even earlier, molecular processes of the emergence and enrichment of bourgeois elements, and the appearance of the capitalist structure. These processes exerted a direct or indirect influence also on other countries with slower rates of economic development.

A concretely historical analysis will show that, in different historical periods, various peoples become vectors of advanced trends and come into the forefront of world history. Countries and peoples that were previously more backward would catch up with and sometimes outstrip those which had been the first to set out on the highway of social progress. All that depended on concrete historical circumstances.

The experience of history speaks of the variable rates and intensities in the development of any particular country or people.

Big feudal powers that had long been predominant later fell far behind in the overall historical process. Their impact on the course of world events, which stemmed mainly from aggressive policies of conquest pursued by the ruling classes, was in the main negative. The decline of such countries was predetermined by the weakness or subservience of elements of progressive social relations. Examples of such development are provided by feudal Spain, the Ottoman Empire, and the Mongol state of the Jenghizids.

There is nothing reprehensible in individual countries or peoples now advancing into the forefront, now receding into temporary obscurity. No peoples can be inherently backward or inherently advanced. Throughout the course of world history, any people can, at some particular stage, become

involved in the overall historical process. In certain conditions, any people is capable of making a contribution to mankind's advance.

It would be equally wrong to suppose that only major countries can set the tone in mankind's progress at all stages of historical development. The experience of history has shown that, in conditions of a crisis in feudal society, more progressive socio-economic relations arose first in a small country, the Netherlands, which for a time came into the foreground. Of course, one cannot ignore the international role of any particular country, and the objective degree of its influence on other states. The Netherlands Revolution did not lead to the triumph of bourgeois social relations even on a European scale, the less so on a world scale. That proved possible only after the revolutions in England and France.

A study of the basic lines of development and of the struggle of progressive principles against the regressive ones, which form a single world historical process, primarily calls for the mainstream of society's advance to be examined, with disregard of secondary streams which do not exert a decisive influence on that movement. World history is not comprised of the sum of particular histories. When they sum up the vast material available and step back to take in the overall picture, scholars must ascertain the main direction of society's development in its most typical forms. The periodisation of world history must also be grounded in that.

Here, of course, one should not disregard such important features in the development of individual countries which give grounds to speak of variants of a single historical process.

It is through the particular that the general often reveals itself. Consequently, due account should be taken of instances of the world-historical process developing, not in a straight line but in "detours", as it were, along various channels of the specific, the "particular". However, alongside the partial and the "particular" in historical development it is important to establish what is the most

"unadulterated" expression of the basic trend in the world-historical process, and it is to the latter that priority should be given in an appraisal of the course of world history. That makes it possible to bring out the leading and predominant elements in the historical process which provide its qualitative characteristic and permit establishing to which social formation a concrete region or country belongs in a given historical period.

Such a definition becomes possible whenever a kind of "yardstick" can be found for a given social formation: the presence of a social, economic, political and cultural complex that embodies the typical features of that social formation, and "represents" it, as it were. The identification of the most unadulterated forms of historical processes or phenomena must go hand in hand with the ascertainment of the objective law-governed patterns that determine the line of development of society in the given concrete conditions.

It is in the "pure" forms of social advance that the law-governed patterns manifest themselves most distinctly. Where those forms are blurred because of various "admixtures" and secondary circumstances, the objective patterns do not operate so distinctly, though they are present, revealing themselves, in the first place, as a main trend, but in the sociological sense, not the summational.

This has a certain bearing on chronology as well. The above-mentioned time-differences in typologically overall world-historical phenomena cannot be considered absolute. In many cases, historical facts testify to the simultaneous maturing of processes and phenomena which, while of the same type, are not directly interlinked. In this connection, it is worthwhile to recall a highly interesting opinion expressed by B. Piotrovsky in respect of the history of material culture: "A certain sum of the elements of the productive forces as characterising the level of their development, as well as the corresponding production relations, can be considered as a definite social degree in the development of material culture ... Similar needs have led to primitive tools, similar in function and similar in form ... Cultures

of the Aeneolithic age produce a considerable similarity in the tools and other articles used ... Complexes of articles of that stage similar in nature are to be seen at a considerable territorial and temporal distance from one another (for example, the Aeneolithic age in Africa and Japan).<sup>12</sup>

In later periods, too, there also existed a certain unity in the foundations of the material and spiritual culture of different peoples. The repetitiveness (and parallel existence) of certain historical phenomena in peoples that have never even known of each other's existence until recently is common knowledge. In respect of the development of feudal relations, N. Konrad wrote that one can only "be amazed at the closeness in time in the development of this process in three leading states of the ancient world: in East Asia, the Middle East, and in Western Europe".<sup>13</sup> He noted the amazing coincidence in the external forms of the nobility's legislation when absolutist states were coming into existence in the early 17th century in France and in Japan, although no contacts between these two countries existed at the time. Regulation of the behaviour of peasants by two absolutist states so profoundly different from each other and located at the opposite ends of the extensive Euro-Asian world was closely related even in the terminology used. This shows that in different countries absolutism as a special form of the feudal state faced problems that were common, irrespective of regional or local features. This can also serve as another confirmation of the unity of the world historical process.

While France experienced the immediate impact of the English bourgeois revolution, Japan could never have done so, yet both in France and in Japan one can easily establish concrete development landmarks peculiar only to them, which can underlie a local periodisation of history. At the same time, it is possible to compare such particular periodisations with world history, i.e., to consider the history of France and Japan against the background of such historic events as, for example, the triumph of bourgeois relations in England. This will help better understand the subsequent

historical processes characterising the development both of French and of Japanese society. In respect of France, that is quite obvious: the English revolution, no doubt, speeded up the anti-feudal trends which a century later ended in a mighty revolutionary upheaval. As for Japan, the collapse of the policy of artificial self-isolation as pursued by the feudal Tokugawa rulers was also predetermined by the overall onslaught of the bourgeoisie, which was initiated by the events in Europe. Many facts of Japanese history in the 17th and 18th centuries follow the mainstream of the world-wide process of the decline of feudalism.

In this respect, the history of Russia is no exception. The emergence and development of Russian absolutism can be understood only against the background of the overall crisis of the feudal social formation.

Synchronisation of historical events taking place simultaneously in widely separated places and, hence, independently of one another, is a specific method of analysis used by the founders of scientific communism as well.

During the last years of his life, Karl Marx did a vast amount of work on writing a précis of books on world history he knew, with special emphasis on the dating of the facts and events taken note by him. After the author's death Frederick Engels called this vast work, over 100 signatures in volume, "chronological excerpts".

Use of the method of chronological correlation makes it possible to compare the historical development of different countries within the framework of one and the same epoch, and, consequently, presents considerable interest for a scientific periodisation of history. The chronological method helps to establish both what is common and what is different in regions and countries. It is particularly important that this method can also be used in ascertaining the general law-governed patterns in history.

The unity of the world-historical process confirms the important conclusion to be drawn from the establishment of partial time-coincidences in definite stages of world deve-

lopment, sometimes at opposite ends of our planet. With all the numerous particular departures from the mainstream of mankind's advance, the overall direction of that advance and, consequently, the stages through which all countries and peoples pass, are, in the main, the same. It is economic determinism that ultimately rectifies all deviations from the logical and predetermines the overall progressive nature of that movement.

Without using the comparative chronological method, it would be very hard to give a scientific typology of historical processes and phenomena.

Mention has also been made of the possibility of drawing up a purely local periodisation of history as well. Equally possible is a particular periodisation of history, that is periodisation in respect of even micronuclei of the social organism (provinces, towns and so on). However, the impossibility of revealing the deep-lying inner forces determining the advance of society is the main chortcoming of such particular periodisations. Only a sufficiently large-scale approach to a consideration of historical processes and phenomena can permit a judgement of their law-governed nature. The problem of periodisation is directly linked with the methodological points of departure. Only on the basis of the materialist understanding of history is a genuinely scientific periodisation of history possible, one that is free of subjectivism.

A detailed knowledge of the factual material is a prime condition for the elaboration of the objective periodisation of history (like any generalisation). It is only given verified data on all the parameters of a concrete historical process that they can be reduced to a single time--frame of reference. Further, the researcher must set about grouping the historical information available.

The periodisation of world history cannot be effected solely on the basis of the existence of any particular socio-economic formation. That is impossible, since the peoples of our planet have gone through definite stages of the historical process at different times.

As follows from the above, the Marxist periodisation of world history as accepted by Soviet historians proceeds from the fact of a law-governed overall pattern and a unity of the economic process as revealed in the successive emergence and replacement of socio-economic formations. Yet--and this should again be emphasised--with all the overall trend towards a consecutive succession of all socio-economic formations with all peoples, some of them, given certain conditions, can bypass individual stages in mankind's overall advance. Thus, in particular, most Slavic and Germanic tribes were able to bypass the slave-owning system and went over directly from primitive-communal relations to feudalism. Among the peoples inhabiting the Soviet Union there are such that bypassed the capitalist formation and went over from feudal relations directly to socialism. This, as a rule, stems from the internal "particular" law-governed patterns of the development of each people sometimes being modified under the powerful impact of the milieu and becoming subordinated to more general patterns in social development. The first state formations of the Germans and Slavs took shape at a time when the slave-owning system was going through a profound crisis and when the disintegration of slave-owning empires gave way to the gradual replacement of unproductive slave labour by the far more productive labour of dependent peasants. This facilitated the development, among the Slavs and the Germans, of feudal relationships, and not of the outmoded relationships of slave ownership. The formerly backward peoples inhabiting the marginal areas of the former Russian Empire, which had preserved feudal and even patriarchal relations, did not follow the discredited capitalist road after the triumph of the socialist revolution in Russia, but took to the road of socialism.

World history has been marked by the steadily growing interlinkage and mutual influence between all countries and peoples. While, in ancient times, that influence was relatively inconsiderable and limited to contacts between immediate neighbours, in class societies--slave owning, feudal and especially capitalist--economic, cultural and political ties between the most distant areas became commonplace. That,

of course, promoted not only to higher rates of historical development but also the overall patterns of the development standing out in ever bolder relief, with ever fewer particular deviations. In general, communications between peoples do away with the illusory ideas of the alleged existence of special and specific laws of the development of Europeans and Asians, blacks and whites, and the like. Such laws have always been common, though the forms of their manifestation do not always coincide.

The particular question sometimes arises of the possibility of an independent periodisation of individual aspects of social activity as conventionally examined outside the overall historical process, for example, a periodisation of the history of culture. Cultural processes, on the plane of history, as well as several other processes, can undoubtedly develop according to their own internal laws. For example, the Renaissance can be regarded as an independent complex of interlinked cultural phenomena; consequently, it can have its own internal periodisation. However, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that the Renaissance was the outcome of a quite concrete period of world history. Though the chronology does not always coincide, one cannot disregard the interlink between various aspects of the multi-lateral historical process. Such is the elementary demand presented by the Marxist-Leninist approach to history.

Objective indicators of the course of any country's socio-economic development should be the point of departure in establishing criteria for the periodisation of that country's history. Such criteria include manifestations of substantial advances in the material productive forces, their inescapable reflection in the sphere of production relations, landmarks in the course of mass social movements (with their corresponding influence on super-structural categories), and the direct or indirect impact of major international events. When he collates such indicators, the researcher cannot but come up against the non-coincidence of concrete dates and numerous variants of internal processes, but, in determining the periodisation of history, the priority must go to events that have exerted a direct impact--positive or negative--on

the fate of the dominant socio-economic relations. In other words, an objective appraisal of a concrete historical process is ultimately determined by the formation approach also at the given level of periodisation.

All other attempts to periodise history cannot but be subjective, for they permit an arbitrary choice of various dates, and preference for certain particular events, irrespective of their actual significance in the overall course of the historical process. Examples of such attractively simple periodisation are provided by the thoughtless division of history according to the formal chronology: "The history of the 16th century", or "history down to 1500" and the like. Another example of an actual rejection of the objective approach is provided by attempts to periodise history according to formal changes exclusively in the area of constitutional law. An extreme example is the so-called "dynastic histories".

Recent years have seen the appearance, in historiography abroad, of a trend that subordinates historical periodisation to the political interests of definite social groups, from a highly nationalistic viewpoint. Thus, in particular, attempts have become widespread to "isolate" the history of one's "own" country from the processes of world history, and in some measure to contrapose to those processes the course of social development on a local national scale. This is done both to artificially "enhance" the importance of one's "own" nation or national state and correspondingly belittle the impact of world events, and also to "justify" nationalistic and hegemonic aspirations or even territorial claims. Of course, any nationalistic interpretation of history has nothing in common with science. In some cases, attempts are made to artificially "extend" the history of a particular country on the false presumption that the more ancient a particular people or its culture, the more significant its role, not only in the past but even today.

It should be remembered that at times a nationalistic interpretation of the historical past of a given people, which has only recently cast off the yoke of colonialism,

can be a reaction to a long-standing ignoring or deliberate distortion of that people's history by the colonialist implanters of "culture". However, even if such a one-sided approach to the history of a given country can be accounted for, that cannot in any way serve to justify all and every nationalistic distortions of the historical past.

The non-acceptance of the Marxist principles of historical periodisation by traditional bourgeois historiography is wholly determined by its refusal to recognise the objective law-governed patterns of social development and, in particular, its negation of the theory of socio-economic formations. Most Western historians have advanced purely idealistic grounds for a periodisation of history. An example is the stand taken by the West German author F. Schalk, in whose opinion periodisation is the process of man's historical self-determination, i.e., an ideological process which reflects in its own way the clash of various views on history. As an example, F. Schalk makes reference to the appearance of the concept of humanism and the existence of the epoch of Humanism. As an integral concept, humanism in Schalk's opinion, is determined not so much by objective characteristics as by the idea of it as a new epoch. The concept of the Middle Ages, which arose simultaneously with humanism, establishes its relation with antiquity (links and distinctions). An awareness of links through distinctions is, from F. Schalk's point of view, the theoretical foundation of historical periodisation.<sup>14</sup>

Attempts have been made in bourgeois historiography to find grounds for mechanical analogy in an examination of events pertaining to different historical epochs and consequently essentially different and defying comparison. Such is the approach of A. Toynbee to the historical process, which he sees at a succession of unconnected and allegedly independent cultural historical complexes, or "civilisations". Strictly speaking, A. Toynbee proceeds from a theological interpretation of history.<sup>15</sup> While dissociating themselves from Toynbee's concept, many Western bourgeois historians have rejected the validity of a periodisation that proceeds from a comparison of the objective facts of socio-

economic development both on a world-wide and a regional scale.

One can fully account for bourgeois historical science's negative attitude towards the Marxist theory of the revolutionary replacement of socio-economic formations, which, by revealing the overall law-governed pattern in the world historical process, shows that capitalism does not exist for all time, and is not the "acme" of civilisation.

As a rule, bourgeois historiography flatly denies the very concept of "socio-economic formation", and tries to substitute for it various kinds of succedanea such as M. Weber's "ideal types" or W. Rostow's "stages of growth", in which secondary elements in the historical process are seen as the foundation of periodisation, while its qualitatively defined features are ignored.

Of late years, bourgeois sociology has seen the spread of attempts to periodise history according to the technical aspect, in the abstract from man and from the system of social relations. Characteristic in this respect is the trend towards replacing patently idealist concepts of the historical process with a kind of pseudo materialist interpretation, by means of which the course of historical development is reduced either to changes in the exclusively technical aspects of social production or to the evolution of objects of material culture, the "history of things". By proclaiming the priority of production processes in the development of society, the West German historian Th. Schieder claims that it is possible to "defeat historical materialism with its own weapon".<sup>16</sup> In divorcing the development of the productive forces from the relations of production, Th. Schieder has deliberately distorted the very concept of historical materialism. The same device has been used by other bourgeois historians who try in one form or another to "eliminate" social problems and "substantiate" the concept of the convergence of capitalism and socialism.

The technical processes at any level of development do not exist of themselves as a blend of purely mechanical elements. Like technology, technical processes are the pro-

duct of social man's activities and are, consequently, intimately connected with a concrete socio-economic structure. That is why the two cannot be examined in isolation from society's organisation. All attempts to specify the stages of progressive development based exclusively on technical indicators, and without an analysis of the dominant social relations are wholly untenable. It is impossible to replace human history with the history of machinery as stripped of social content. Such a stand, which ignores the class structure of society, is designed to gloss over the antagonistic contradictions inherent in capitalism.

The adherents of the "technical" approach to the periodisation of history sometimes brush aside the accusation that they have gone over to materialist positions which involve the recognition of the priority of the economic factors. For instance, W. Rostow says that economic factors do not play any decisive part; he claims that the first impetus towards economic modernisation should be seen, not in the economic forces but in a kind of reaction to some form of external pressure--real or imaginary--exerted by the stronger over the weaker.<sup>17</sup> In this case, Rostow has come out in defence of the "theory of force". This cannot be considered fortuitous, for he "theoretically" justifies the imperialist practice of forcibly implanting "culture" on developing countries.

Characteristic of most bourgeois historians is the desire to totally abandon any global periodisation of history, with the preference going to local or "partial" periodisations. In this respect, one cannot but note how close this position stands to efforts by nationalist elements to construct exclusively "national" periodisations of history, which also gloss over the process of the revolutionary replacement of socio-economic formations.

In dealing with the problem of historical periodisation, one cannot take up any quantitative, or arithmetic approach to the sum of phenomena which testify to the appearance or the onset of new and more advanced socio-economic relations. As a rule, the new is at first weaker than

the predominant formation which it is ultimately called upon to replace. The territorial location of more progressive social relations is restricted at first, and the emergent new structure is the harbinger of more advanced socio-economic forms. Nevertheless, the very fact of the emergence of what is new calls for its reflection in the periodisation of history, inasmuch as it testifies to the appearance of a general trend (law) in mankind's development which is beginning to determine its advance.

Bourgeois, reformist and revisionist-nationalist historiography flatly refuses to "acknowledge" that the Great October Socialist Revolution was an historic divide which ushered in a new epoch of history, contemporary history. Questions of historical periodisation are thus intimately connected with overall world-view problems, with the ideological confrontation between opposing socio-economic systems. Changes in the world-historical process and the accelerating pace of society's advance with the transition from one socio-economic formation to another, that is more progressive one--these are objective facts long established in historical science.

Hence the need to speak of "time" in terms of history. The succession of historical events in the time scale is one of the most important aspects of the historical process; it is objective in character and independent of anybody's consciousness. But "historical time" is not a constant magnitude. It changes in accordance with the objective conditions of society's existence. The differences in the development rates of socio-economic formations also determines the distinctions in the time-count. Thus, "historical time" is a kind of scale for measuring society's accelerating forward movement.

Problems of "historical time" are significant for the periodisation of history as a whole. The determination of time differences in the development of various processes helps specify their role in society's overall movement and to establish the length, rate, onset and conclusion of definite forms of that movement. In the opinion of P. Anev,

the Bulgarian historian, an important part is played by the rhythm of historical development. The rhythmical nature of the economic process, he writes, lays the ground for the development of society's political and intellectual life, which possesses its relatively independent dynamism and rhythm. The relatively rhythmical nature of socio-political processes in antagonistic (class) formations manifests itself in the constant succession of periods of exacerbation of the class contradictions during the epochs of comparatively peaceful development.<sup>18</sup> Of course, the problem of the rate of the historical process cannot even be posed without resort to the categories "socio-economic formation", "historical epoch" and "historical period". "In history, rhythm (periodicity) changes its nature in the conditions of different epochs and socio-economic formations."<sup>19</sup>

Within the framework of any socio-economic formation there may take place both quantitative changes (a greater or lesser number of various phenomena), and qualitative changes (the appearance of new and previously unknown aspects, which make it possible to speak of the onset of the new stage in the development of a given formation). Qualitative changes in society are historical science's main and direct object of study, and the historian is in duty bound to study phenomena as they appear in terms of time. Otherwise, it will be hard for him to determine, not only their immediate causes but their actual significance, their place in the chain of other phenomena.

Alongside historical time, a definition of the spatial borders of phenomena under study is of great significance to historical research. Soviet historical literature has dealt with the question of a historical region as an independent category in historical science. There is no doubt that the very concept of region cannot be examined in isolation from historical time. Any historical phenomenon calls for a single spatial and time characteristic.

The acceleration in the rate of social development in definite periods is also linked with technological progress, for example in the area of communications. This has exerted

a definite influence on a territory where certain historical processes or events are under way; distances lose their former significance and the time required for related processes or events to be taken in is reduced, that involving even extensive territories. The highest acceleration rate of society's advance is to be seen in periods in which the most radical changes take place, the course of historical time hinging directly on the dynamism of the social processes taking place.

Questions of historical periodisation have a number of aspects of practical significance. Thus, in particular, the teaching of history has always been marked by a conventional division into ancient, mediaeval, modern, and contemporary history. As will readily be realised, that stems from the need to provide a compressed compendium of historical knowledge convenient for the process of tuition. By ancient history is understood mankind's development within the framework of two social formations: the primitive-communal and slave-owning. Mediaeval history is in fact identified with the predominant position held by feudalism. Modern history is understood as the period of the triumph of bourgeois social relations, with Marxist and allied historiography setting the beginning of contemporary history at the completion of the world's first victorious socialist revolution in October 1917. In bourgeois literature, the line of division between mediaeval, modern and contemporary history is drawn differently.

Of course, though the four-element division of world history is practically convenient, it suffers from some shortcomings of an overall and terminological nature. Thus, ancient history includes both pre-class relations ("deep antiquity") and the first antagonistic social formation. It would be advisable to treat pre-class society under a separate rubric.

The term "Middle Ages" makes sense only in its application to Europe. In most Asian countries, feudal relations



arose earlier than in the West and continued to exist over a far greater length of time. That is why, in the main, one can speak of "modern history" in respect of the peoples of Asia and Africa in the sense that the emergence and triumph of the European bourgeoisie were directly linked with their colonial expansion into the Afro-Asian countries and the latter's enslavement. Consequently, the use of the traditional division of history into ancient, mediaeval, modern and contemporary which arose on a Eurocentrist basis calls for a detailed definition of the formational content of that imperfect terminology. All this again emphasises the conventional nature of historical periodisation.

In the theoretical sense, the relation between the scientific periodisation of history and the actual historical process corresponds to the dialectical interlink between the logical and the historical (the empirical). These two concepts should not be made fully identical, but it will be no less erroneous to contrast them with each other, since the logical is ultimately historical (empirical).

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> V. Hajinikolov, Bulgarian historian has defined the periodisation of history as a time-division "according to the qualitative distinctions of the processes taking place in it". (V. Hajinikolov, "Some Methodological Problems in the Periodisation of History", The Methodological and Historiographical Problems of Historical Science, Sofia, 1973, Vol. 1, p. 57, in Bulgarian).

<sup>2</sup> K. Marx and F. Engels, Selected Works, Vol. 1, Moscow, 1969, pp. 503-504.

<sup>3</sup> Karl Marx, Capital, Vol. 1, Moscow, 1969, p. 21.

<sup>4</sup> K. Marx, F. Engels, Werke, Vol. 19, pp. 398, 404.

<sup>5</sup> V.I. Lenin, Collected Works, Moscow, Vol. 21, p. 145.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., Vol. 35, p. 229.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., Vol. 23, p. 80.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., Vol. 21, p. 146.

<sup>9</sup> For details, see: The Primitive Periphery of Pre-Capitalist Societies, Moscow, 1978 (in Russian).

<sup>10</sup> Karl Marx, Capital, Vol. 1, p. 19..

<sup>11</sup> Karl Marx, Theories of Surplus-Value, Part 2, Moscow, 1968, p. 237.

<sup>12</sup> Historical Materialism and the Social Philosophy of the Bourgeoisie Today, Moscow, 1960, p. 162 (in Russian).

<sup>13</sup> N.I. Konrad, "The Middle Ages in Historical Science", From the History of Socio-Political Ideas, Moscow, 1955, p. 82 (in Russian).

<sup>14</sup> H. Diller, F. Schalk, "Studien zur Periodisierung und zum Epochebegriff", Mainz, Wiesbaden, 1972, No. 4, pp. 157-160.

<sup>15</sup> A. Toynbee, A Study of History, London, Vol. 1, 1934.

<sup>16</sup> Th. Schieder, "Grundfragen der neueren deutschen Geschichte", Historische Zeitschrift, Vol. 192, Part I, 1961, p. 3.

- 17 W. Rostow, Politics and the Stages of Growth, Cambridge, Mass., 1971, p. 3.
- 18 P. Anev, "Time and Structure in the Historical Process", Methodological and Historiographical Problems of Historical Science, Sofia, 1973, Vol. 1, p. 31 (in Bulgarian).
- 19 Ibid., p. 30.

#### SOCIAL PROGRESS

Many present-day documents, books and articles, speeches and other public addresses make frequent mention of social progress, the historical progressiveness of various social phenomena, and progressive trends in the development of mankind. The very word "progress" has come into general use and is constantly being used to express the idea of forward movement, the victory of the new over the old, the transition to higher forms of development, and the like. For instance, we often speak of "technological progress", a term which stands in no need of any special explanation.

But what is meant by "social progress", or, in other words, by progress in the development of society? What is the criterion of social progress? Does it exist at all?

Though such questions may seem elementary, they stand at the hub of an acute ideological struggle and are one of the sources of irreconcilable differences between Marxist social science and various trends in bourgeois sociology and historiography.

Though this struggle arose in the fairly distant past, we would like to deal here in brief with the question as it stands today.

The idea of progress is expressive of improvement, a transition to higher stages of development, the elimination of what is obsolete and outmoded, and the victory of what is new and advanced. Social progress, i.e., progress in the development of society, has a similar meaning. It is a question, first and foremost, of mankind's forward movement.

The Soviet scholar Boris Porshnev was quite right when he wrote: "The main distinction between the Marxian theory of progress and the Hegelian one is that Marx placed the latter from its head onto its feet, and revealed the material content of the movement from non-freedom to freedom .... In the place of the self-development of the spirit and the corresponding progress in the consciousness of freedom, Marx put the development of the productive forces, successive change-over in forms of ownership, the law of the antagonism between, and the struggle of, classes."<sup>1</sup> Thus, inherent in the materialist understanding of history is the idea of social progress, the most generalised expression of which is the successive replacement of socio-economic formations by new ones, inasmuch as each of these is a higher stage in the development of society.

The idea of social progress, i.e., the forward movement of society, is in essence revolutionary. It means the development of society in an ascending line, in other words, not a regressive or circular movement, not marking time, not stagnation, not the conservation of existing social forms and phenomena, but the unfailing replacement of obsolete and outmoded institutions by new ones that are young and in a state of development. Just as the slave-owning system yielded place to the feudal, and the feudal to the capitalist, the latter, i.e., present-day capitalism will be swept away by a more perfect social structure that has been prepared by the entire previous development of society—by communism.

Marxism regards society as "a living organism in a state of constant development".<sup>2</sup> The materialist understanding

of history has provided a genuinely scientific interpretation of mankind's roads of development and has made possible a comprehensive study of the inception, development and decline of successive socio-economic formations: the primitive-communal, slave-owning, feudal, capitalist, and communist. These are ascending stages in the development of human society, being distinguished from one another first and foremost by the level of the development of the productive forces and the social conditions of their utilisation.

Changes in the nature of the productive forces comprise the foundation that determines the break-up of the old production relations and the emergence of new ones, the transition from lower to higher stages of society's development. That is why Lenin had every reason to call the development of the productive forces the "highest criterion of social progress".<sup>3</sup> The concept "productive forces" includes not only the means and implements of labour but also the activities of man as user of those means. That is why the productive forces cannot be divorced from the production relations that correspond to them. The productive forces do not exist of and for themselves, or without a close interaction with society. Their revolutionising influence is due to changes in the production relations, which may sometimes lag behind or be delayed but must ultimately come into keeping with the productive forces. As an example, mention might be made of the Industrial Revolution in bourgeois England at the turn of the 19th century, then spreading to other West European countries. Its material basis was provided by industrial inventions which brought about a revolution in the process of production (the loom, the steam engine and other technological innovations). All this gave a considerable impetus to the progressive development of the productive forces and almost immediately led up to substantial changes in the production relations. The manufacture stage in the development of capitalism was succeeded by the machine stage, which encouraged the capitalist socialisation of labour

on a mass scale and consolidated bourgeois production relations.

There soon followed the concomitant changes in the socio-political sphere of capitalist society (the consolidation of the proletariat as a class, the struggle for universal suffrage, a certain "democratisation" of the bourgeois state and so on).

The consistent revolutionary transition from one socio-economic formation to another, from a lower to a higher one, is an expression of social progress in its most general form. But within each socio-economic formation there takes place a constant struggle between what is new and what is old, between what is outmoded and what is coming into the foreground. Superstructural phenomena may provide a powerful encouraging or cramping impact on the material conditions of society's life. The activities of society's progressive forces help to eliminate what holds up the advance of society, and convey a forward movement.

Marxism, which regards progress as an objective pattern of social development, eschews a primitive understanding of social progress as an ascent in a straight line. The law-governed pattern in society's advance from lower forms of existence to higher ones proceeds amidst an acute struggle between the progressive and the outmoded. The transition from one socio-economic formation to a higher one is revolutionary, not evolutionary in nature. Lenin emphasised that "it is undialectical, unscientific and theoretically wrong to regard the course of world history as smooth and always in a forward direction, without occasional gigantic leaps back".<sup>4</sup>

The course of historical development cannot but engender the new, which contains certain transformed elements of the old. As Lenin emphasised in this connection, there exists "a development that repeats, as it were, stages that have already been passed, but repeats them in a different way, on a higher basis ('the negation of negation'), a development, so to speak, that proceeds in spirals, not in a

straight line."<sup>5</sup> He often expressed the idea of the inevitable growth, with mankind's forward development, not only of the scale of the masses' activity but also of their immediate impact on the course of history. In the early antagonistic class formations, the bulk of those directly involved in production remained more or less passive participants in the historical events of the time. However, under capitalism, there already appeared a new social class, the proletariat, which, primarily because of its objective position in the process of production, has proved able to become a great revolutionary force. The special role of the working class grew steadily as capitalism shed its progressive role. The working class, which has rallied about itself the vast masses of the people, is a vital factor of progress in world history. The activity of the toiling masses, and in the first place the working class, is a powerful accelerator of social progress. The mounting tempo of mankind's progressive development is a direct outcome of the involvement in it of fresh hundreds of millions of people, as Lenin pointed out.<sup>6</sup>

Recognition of the development of the productive forces as the "highest criterion of social progress" should not oversimplify the problem as a whole, or reduce historical progress to a cut-and-dried scheme. An overall criterion can provide only an objective foundation, whose existence presupposes a concrete analysis of particular and local manifestations of social life.

Plekhanov wrote: "We must study the facts of the past life of mankind in order to discover in them the laws of its progress. Only he is capable of foreseeing the future who has understood the past."<sup>7</sup>

As the experience of history shows, social progress prior to the epoch of socialism is not effected along a straight line, and painlessly. The entire history of mankind until the emergence of the first phase of the communist formation bore an indelible imprint, indeed a kind of mark of Cain: social progress carved its way with fire and sword, with blood and iron. This was achieved by means that

were a torment to the masses of the people and appeared in the role of an uncontrollable and fear-inspiring force.

Under the primitive-communal system, as pointed out by Porshnev, "All were equally free but at the same time profoundly unfree, since the individual did not stand out from the clan, community, or tribe. In the context of world progress, this primitive non-freedom of man was even fuller and deeper than slavery."<sup>8</sup>

Yet the slave-owning mode of production was a tremendous stride forward, progress as against the previous thousands of years of the supremacy of primitive-communal relations. The ruthless exploitation of slave labour speeded up the advance of society. As Frederick Engels pointed out in Anti-Dühring: "It was slavery that first made possible the division of labour between agriculture and industry on a large scale, and thereby also Hellenism, the flowering of the ancient world. Without slavery, no Greek state, no Greek art and science; without slavery, no Roman Empire. But without the basis laid by Grecian culture, and the Roman Empire, also no modern Europe. We should never forget that our whole economic, political and intellectual development presupposes a state of things in which slavery was as necessary as it was universally recognised."<sup>9</sup>

The feudal socio-economic formation, which arose on the ruins of the slave-owning system, actually ruled for over a thousand years. Feudal relations of production were a new and considerable forward step in the development of society, as against slave-ownership. This form of exploitation was less brutal than its predecessor, yet throughout the entire existence of feudal states, the latter were rocked by anti-feudal movements.

The birth, within feudal society, of new, capitalist production relations in keeping with the rapid changes in the nature of the productive forces--and this was a profoundly progressive phenomenon--was accompanied by the massive and forcible expropriation, the impoverishment and death of very many people. It was literally on the bones

of millions of nameless victims that capitalism emerged on the world scene as the then vehicle of social progress.

Today, social progress is no longer compatible with capitalism. All the progressive phenomena taking place in the capitalist world are in essence directed against capitalism and are linked with its negation, with numerous factors that promote the revolutionary transition from capitalism to socialism. The struggle for social progress in capitalist countries is a struggle for the destruction of the rule of the monopoly upper crust of the bourgeoisie, a struggle for the unity and cohesion of the democratic forces as headed by the working class, a struggle directed towards thwarting the military plans of the imperialists, hold back the onslaught of the reactionary monopolies against the living standards and the political rights of the working people, give a rebuff to bourgeois ideology, which is vitiating the minds of the masses, and ensure the spread of advanced social ideas, those of socialism. It is only with mankind's transition from antagonistic class formations to socialism that social progress sheds its contradictory and dual nature and, for the first time in history, operates openly and in a straight line.

Even in the early years of the 20th century, the idea of progress in world history--true, in the specific sense of world progress--was shared by the overwhelming majority of historians, including those who, on the whole, adhered to the idealistic positions. In 1907, the editors of the well-known multivolume Cambridge Modern History pointed out in the Preface that the idea of mankind's progress should be accepted as a scientific hypothesis for the writing of history.<sup>10</sup> Bourgeois historians were not yet apprehensive of the idea of progress in world history, which they linked now with an overall rise in culture, now with the development of rationalism and even with the struggle for the freedom of conscience and political convictions.

Of course, there were numerous attempts to interpret the idea of progress in a mystically speculative spirit and

to deduce it from various kinds of theological conceptions. However, the idea of progress was most frequently associated with the spread of education, the development of ideas of freedom (in their bourgeois sense), religious tolerance, the growth of cultural needs, and finally, with the improving welfare of the population.

All that has, in the main, receded into the past. At the 11th International Congress of Historical Sciences, held in Stockholm in 1960, Erich Rothacker delivered an address on the philosophy of history, in which he unequivocally stated the following: "The Marxist theory of progress in the strictly constructive sense has hardly had any significance in historiographical practice outside the Russian world."<sup>11</sup> He distorted the actual state of affairs and at the same time tried to present Marxism as a purely "Russian" phenomenon. Erich Rothacker himself is, of course, a representative of the basic trend in bourgeois historiography, which proceeds from a negation of the unity of the world-historical process and its law-governed pattern, and advances theories of the cyclical nature of social development, the inescapable repetitiveness of definite "cycles" in the life of mankind, while regarding world history now as the sum of isolated civilisations, each developing of itself and with its own period of rise, efflorescence and decline, now as a vast congeries of fortuities, without any inner meaning.

In considering why most Western historians have rejected progressiveness in social development, E. Carr sees the causes in the changes in the fortunes of the countries they represent and in a relative decline of such countries' role in the world historical process. As an example, Carr makes reference to the evolution of the views of F. Meineke who, with the development of historical events, went over to ever more conservative, or, more precisely, reactionary, positions in his interpretation of history. The same reasons have underlain the cri-

sis in British bourgeois historiography. "In the nineteenth century," Carr writes, "British historians, with scarcely an exception, regarded the course of history as a demonstration of the principle of progress: they expressed the ideology of a society in a condition of remarkably rapid progress. History was full of meaning for British historians, so long as it seemed to be going our way; now that it has taken a wrong turning, belief in the meaning of history has become a heresy. After the First World War, Toynbee made a desperate attempt to replace a linear view of history by a cyclical theory—the characteristic ideology of a society in decline. Since Toynbee's failure, British historians have for the most part been content to throw up their hands and declare that there is no general pattern in history at all."<sup>12</sup> It is noteworthy, Carr goes on to add, that the most recent prophets of decline, the sceptics, who see no sense in history and consider that no progress exists, belong to that part of the world and that class of society which had played a leading role in the development of civilisation for several recent generations. They can hardly find comfort in that role now having passed over to others.<sup>13</sup>

There can be no doubt that the idea of social progress which was originally shared by the vast majority of bourgeois philosophers, sociologists and historians, has lost all its attractiveness to them with the exacerbation of the class struggle and the emergence on the political scene of the proletariat as the antipode of the bourgeoisie. "The appearance of the proletariat on the political scene in England and France engendered in the mind of the bourgeoisie uncertainty of the eternal duration of their social predominance; progressive Progress had lost its charms."<sup>14</sup>

When capitalism entered its monopoly stage, imperialism, bourgeois society set its historians and sociologists the "social task" of "proving" the thesis that capitalism is the ultimate stage of development, the peak of what

can be achieved by mankind, so that radical evolutionary changes are impossible: it only remains for the capitalist system to be improved along evolutionary lines. It was then that there began the corresponding seekings in various directions, which have often been diametrically opposed to one another. Some bourgeois historians have taken to discrediting the objective laws of social development and denying the role of revolutionary changes in history, doing so by inventing "proofs" of the undying nature of capitalism. Others have tried to "substantiate" the perfect nature of bourgeois social relations by asserting that capitalism is an eternal category, whose elements are to be found both in the history of antiquity and in the life of all tribes and peoples.

Although the development of the productive forces under the capitalist system has resulted in an unparalleled upswing, that system is incapable of fully realizing the vast scientific and technological potential accumulated by mankind. Under capitalism, even narrowly understood, technological progress receives a one-sided and distorted development.

It is therefore not fortuitous that almost all present-day bourgeois historiography has either rejected or at least denied recognition of social progress in history. Typical in this respect are the "radical" utterances of R. Collingwood, who has called all history nothing but "the history of thought". He has found the idea of historical progress totally unacceptable, for, as he sees it, it has been a consequence of ignorance and a restricted knowledge on the part of previous historians, whose historical outlook was hemmed in by the limits of the immediate past. When Voltaire proclaimed that all history is contemporary and that nothing can be generally established earlier than the end of the 15th century, he meant, as R. Collingwood writes, not only that we can learn nothing of earlier periods but that such an earlier period does not deserve anything to be known about it. The pau-

city of historical sources in respect of the Middle Ages led Voltaire to the conviction that they were a period of barbarism and superstition.

Consequently, social progress, in Collingwood's opinion, is the outcome of an uneven level of knowledge on the part of historians of separate historical periods, this because of the insufficient number of sources at their disposal. The more researchers delved into the historical past, the fewer documentary evidence they were able to unearth, which resulted in the invention that the farther removed an historical period is from the researcher, the more it was a period of "decadence", while closer periods were seen as periods of "great ages". "The old dogma of a single historical progress leading to the present, and the modern dogma of historical cycles, that is, of a multiple progress leading to 'great ages' and then to decadence, are thus mere projections of the historian's ignorance upon the screen of the past."<sup>15</sup>

Karl Popper also questions the possibility of establishing some kind of "reasonable meaning" in history. At the same time, he rejects the existentialist idea of the complete senselessness and even "absurdity" of the historical process. In his opinion, it is possible, with purely practical purposes, to make history "meaningful", proceeding from ethical ideas. The historian should take up a definite stand, guided by his ethical views and, on that basis, give his interpretation of the course of historical events. That kind of interpretation is an expression of rational "practical politics". For K. Popper, there exists no law of historical development as ensuring further progress. "The fate of that progress—and, at the same time our fate—depends on us ourselves."<sup>16</sup> In itself a denial of the ideas of progress in history testifies to a profound crisis in bourgeois historical thought.

When problems of the periodisation of world history came up for discussion at the Stockholm Congress, some

West German and US historians, in their polemic with the Marxists, advanced the thesis that it is technological achievements and discoveries promoting the development of industry that are landmarks in the history of mankind, for they determine its progressive (sic!) development, and not social revolutions, which mark a transition from one socio-economic formation to another. Thus, for example, it was asserted that the industrial revolution in Europe was "more important" than the French bourgeois revolution of the end of the 18th century, and that the discovery of nuclear energy is a more important date than the Great October Socialist Revolution of 1917 in Russia.

What is the significance of this "theory"? The main thing is that its authors and propagandists are trying to lead people away from problems of social development that present a danger from the viewpoint of the present-day bourgeoisie towards a "calmer" area of the history of technology. The concept of social progress is replaced by progress in technology. But the genuine history of mankind is complex and multi-coloured, rich in such events as clashes between antagonistic class forces, social and national movements, the appearance of various kinds of political and economic institutions, the struggle between ideas, and so on. All this is disregarded by the adherents of the theory of "technological progress", who are interested in emasculating the complex, many-sided and vivid process of history and treating it in a one-sided and drab manner. There can be no doubt that the technological theory of progress, which has been taken up by certain reformist and revisionist elements, is a kind of subversion against Marxism.

There are people in the West who have been impressed by the alleged objective and scientific nature of this "theory", which is publicised by the right-wing socialists as "materialistic". Karl Renner, an Austrian Socialist leader, wrote that it is technology that was ultimately "determinative" in social life.<sup>17</sup> The Social-Demo-

cratic apologists of capitalism, who speak so magniloquently of its "transformation" as conditioned by the revolutionary changes in the area of technology, are at one with the present-day revisionists, who also feel greatly drawn to the task of erasing the borderline between scientific and technological progress and its consequences, in the socialist countries and in the USA.

Thus, the pseudo-scientific and allegedly objective technological theory of progress is an attempt to consciously distort the course of the world-historical process, justify capitalism and colonialism, and paper over the genuine significance of society's forward movement, this by absolutising the development of technology and deliberately divorcing it from its determinative socio-economic environment.

That is how things stand with the "fashionable" theories, hostile to Marxism, of the negation of social progress or the falsification of the idea of progress in present-day bourgeois historiography.

All this goes hand in hand with the growth of such interrelated trends and phenomena in bourgeois historiography as: 1) a hypercritical approach to historical events, and a rejection of all attempts to explain or generalise them; the reduction of history to a "microanalysis" of individual documents and particular research into narrow themes; 2) a negation of the very possibility of objective historical research, and the proclamation of extreme subjectivism in historiography according to the principle: "every historian is himself a creator of history". Then comes an actual negation of history as a science, this being linked with the spread of the view of history as a special art; 3) an upsurge of voluntarism, which leads to a conscious falsification of history in the spirit of the "pragmatic presentism", now fairly widespread in the USA. Historians belonging to this trend wilfully "adapt" history to the needs of the ruling social upper crust, and engage in an "interpretation of the past for the sake



of the present". Substantiation of an "Atlantic community", the "superiority of the American way of life" and anti-communism—such is the essence of this trend.

In his general preface to A General History of Civilisations, its editor Maurice Grouzet categorically denies the very possibility of a comparison between individual epochs and their classification, and the more so the justification of judgements of progress or the laws of development of various civilisations.<sup>18</sup> Thus, we have here a conception of the incognisability of the world-historical process and its negation, that stemming from the overall methodological principles in present-day bourgeois historiography. Obviously, if the world-historical process as such does not exist, whence a movement that embraces all this process, which advances indifferently (progress) or moves backward (regression).

In essence, present-day bourgeois historiography finds itself in an individious situation because of its rejection of social progress in history. Such an all-out negation inevitably brings in its train a pessimistic conclusion regarding the stagnation of mankind and the absence of any prospects for its development. Those bourgeois historians who cautiously use the term "social progress" eschew any recognition of its revolutionary content. In their understanding of social progress as a system for the improvement of the organisation of society, they are unwilling to agree with fundamental improvements being achievable only along the revolutionary road.

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Inasmuch as in literature and in political documents (declarations and programmes of political organisations), the term "social progress" has acquired extensive use, it is necessary to distinguish the use of this concept in its broad and narrower meaning.

As has already been pointed out, the first and fundamental meaning of the term "social progress" expresses

mankind's forward movement, whose global expression is the progressive succession of socio-economic formations.

In its second meaning, social progress does not have such an all-embracing content. In its narrow sense, it can be regarded as measures designed to improve the organisation of a given society, including definite local reforms, which are not necessarily revolutionary in nature. In everyday use, social progress is often understood in this limited meaning.

The researcher has to take account of both meanings of the term in the appropriate context.

In its narrow sense, social progress is, as a rule, delayed in its action. Its genuine historical significance may differ in connection with its social content, direction and scale. The researcher into history has constantly to deal with the origins of any particular reform or to discover its initiators, so as to be able to determine with greater or lesser confidence the actual significance of the various progressive transformations. One comes up against so-called mini-reforms, which form part of the overall concept of social progress taken in the narrow sense, but the actual significance of which should not be exaggerated. The historian has to take into account that the various manifestations of social progress in the narrow sense of the term, right down to the most inconsiderable, are an area of constant struggle, with human passions flaring up, with the variegated interests of classes, their sections and individual groupings being revealed. Practice has shown that contrasting or non-coincidental interests of classes or big social groups are conducive to the concept of social progress being given a content that reflects the particular aims pursued.

Social progress in its fundamental and broad sense is of particular importance to mankind's historical destinies. Today social progress is synonymous with the construction of communism in the USSR, the successes scored by the world socialist system, the liberation of oppressed

peoples from the yoke of colonialism, the mounting scale of class battles in the capitalist countries, the triumph of the forces of peace, and the further decline and disintegration of the world capitalist system.

The question of the rates of social progress is of methodological significance in principle. One hundred and fifty years after the English bourgeois revolution, the French revolution broke out. Fifty years lie between the French bourgeois revolution of the end of the 18th century and the 1848 revolution. Then a somewhat shorter period--34 years--lies between the first attempt to set up a dictatorship of the proletariat--the Paris Commune--and the 1905-1907 revolution in Russia.

Ten years after the defeat of the first Russian revolution, the February Revolution broke out, to be followed by the October Revolution of 1917, which ushered in a new epoch in human history. The masses who carried out the 1917 Revolution in Russia were not relegated into the background and stripped of the fruits of their victory, as had always been the case in great bourgeois revolutions. On the contrary, those masses became full masters of their own fate. The growing rate of historical development is ever more reducing the time for capitalism's existence as a single all-embracing world system.

We are living in highly interesting times rich in major historical events which are determining what lies in store for future generations. The world of today is a kind of gigantic laboratory which is evolving a new human society.

We enjoy an opportunity, rare in history, of sensing its pulse, comparing the two opposite worlds, two civilisations, in their struggle and competition. As a result, the very notion of progress in world history and in its broadest sense has lost its abstract nature and is becoming tangible. Since we are in a position to compare the two socio-economic formations, we can distinctly see, not only the overall directions of mankind's forward movement

but also its concrete results. We can observe the variety of forms in the transition from capitalism to socialism and study the highly effectual methods of dealing, in an unparalleled brief period of time, with vast and hitherto irresolvable social problems.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> B.F. Porshnev, "The Periodisation of the World-Historical Progress in Hegel and Marx", Transactions of the Higher School. The Philosophical Sciences, 1969, No. 2, p. 61 (in Russian).
- <sup>2</sup> V.I. Lenin, Collected Works, Moscow, Vol. 1, p. 165.
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid., Vol. 13, p. 243.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid., Vol. 22, p. 310.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid., Vol. 21, p. 54.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid., Vol. 33, p. 158.
- <sup>7</sup> G.V. Plekhanov, Selected Philosophical Works, Vol. 1, Moscow, 1974, p. 510.
- <sup>8</sup> B.F. Porshnev, op. cit., p. 61.
- <sup>9</sup> F. Engels, Anti-Dühring, Moscow, 1969, p. 216.
- <sup>10</sup> The Cambridge Modern History, Cambridge, Vol. 1, 1931, pp. V-VIII.
- <sup>11</sup> XI Congrès international des sciences historiques. Rapports, Stockholm, Vol. 1, 1960, p. 3.
- <sup>12</sup> E. Carr, What Is History?, London, 1962, p. 37.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 111.
- <sup>14</sup> Paul Lafargue, Le déterminisme économique de Karl Marx, Paris, 1928, p. 17.
- <sup>15</sup> R. Collingwood, The Idea of History, New York, 1956, p. 328.

- 16 K. Popper, Selbstbetrug durch das Wissen. In der Sinn der Geschichte, Munich, 1946, p. 328.
- 17 K. Renner, The Institutions of Private Law and Their Social Functions, London, 1954, pp. 282-283.
- 18 Histoire Generale des Civilisations, Vol. 1, Paris, 1960, p. IX.

### Section III. The Researcher's Laboratory

#### THE HISTORICAL FACT

The "historical fact" category is the foundation of the entire edifice of historical science. No development of historical thought is conceivable without factual material. But the "fact" concept itself requires specification, for it has very many aspects. The main feature of its study, from the historian's standpoint, is that it is not, as a rule, an object directly observed by the researcher, but one studied through some sources. The materialist conception of history posits "fact" as an object of study existing outside the historian's consciousness and independent of it. There are simple facts and more complicated ones. The historical process, being a chain of interconnected facts, in itself may be regarded as a historical fact. At the same time reflected in the cognising subject's thinking is the more or less accurate content of the fact, mediated though it is by a source. It does not change its essence even when passing through the prism of human perception, and remains objective reality. Approximation to that reality constitutes the substance of historical cognition.

Historical science has gone through a rather complicated evolution in its attitude to fact. At first it was assumed a priori that the researcher's task was to gather facts, the problem of the nature of facts not being considered at all. Later the contradiction between the fact and its interpretation gradually became apparent. Some historians

persisted in rejecting the need for generalisation and a substantiated explanation of the empirically given reality. They believed that facts somehow lost their objective significance if they were in any way interpreted.

The objectivity of such an approach has always been purely illusory. In actual fact even the initial recording of data by any researcher cannot be absolutely neutral. It reflects to a certain extent his position. Essentially, facts as objects of historical research cannot exist by themselves, without any evaluation.

As long as bourgeois historical science held comparatively progressive positions, taking issue with feudal theological and other reactionary interpretations of the historical process, most historians recognised the organic links between historical facts and their generalisations. As the crisis in bourgeois historiography grew, these concepts came into conflict with each other. There was a sharp shift from the original raising of historical facts to an absolute rejection of their independent significance. Already late in the 19th century a number of prominent historians insisted that historical facts were entirely determined by the subjective position of the scholar who was thus said to "create" them.

Two extreme views of historical facts still exist in bourgeois historiography. One of them may be characterised as raising facts to an absolute and rejecting the need for their interpretation and evaluation. The French historian Fustel de Coulanges believed that the written source was the be-all. Any stepping beyond textual study of documents was questioned or condemned.

The other and exact opposite approach that has become most widely spread now is based on negating the existence of facts as objective realities. In the view of the supporters of this standpoint, the concept of fact is formed in the historian's consciousness. W. Windelband, H. Rickert, as well as their numerous imitators, advocated "from critical positions" the unknowability of facts and, consequently, the historian's arbitrary approach to their evaluation. A. Lappo-Danilevsky, a Russian pre-revolutionary historian,

regarded the historical fact as "the impact of the given individual's consciousness on the environment, particularly on the social environment".<sup>1</sup>

C.L. Becker, one of the most prominent representatives of presentism in the USA, insists that historical facts are illusory, and that it is not the facts but bias that guides the historian. He doubts the reliability of any historical facts whatsoever because "these vanished realities give place to pale reflections, impalpable images or ideas of themselves, and these pale reflections, and impalpable images which cannot be touched or handled are all that is left of the actual occurrence".<sup>2</sup>

R. Collingwood completely rejects the independent significance of sources, emphasising their arbitrary interpretation by the historian. In his opinion, the researcher is an autonomous interpreter of the past, which deprives the latter of objectivity. The "historical fact" concept thus turns out to be largely illusory.<sup>3</sup>

E. Carr believes that it is not any event that may be regarded as a historical fact, but only that event which has historic significance. The scholar must know the greatest possible number of facts pertaining to the period under study, in order to be able to select a few significant facts, thus turning them into historical facts and discarding the insignificant facts as non-historical. In Carr's view, history is interpretation; interpretation is history's arterial blood. He stresses at the same time that the scholar is not a "tyrannical master" of facts. The relations between the historian and facts are those of equality. They need each other. A historian without facts is not on solid ground, he is useless; the facts without him are dead and meaningless. In answering the question "what is history?", Carr states that history is a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts, an unending dialogue between the present and the past.<sup>4</sup>

J. Topolski regards historical facts as a dynamic integral system (holism), underlining that they are in a state of constant change. "The question arises," he writes, "at

what moment we deal with the given fact and at what other moment, with a different one."<sup>5</sup>

However conditional the transitions from one state to another, historical knowledge cannot do without recording the exact qualitative definiteness of the object under study. The very formulation of the question of holism, that is, of the integrity of the historical fact, presupposes its qualitative definiteness. If this assumption is rejected, the researcher will slip towards unrestricted relativism leading to the "disappearance" of facts. As for the initial and final boundaries, they can only be defined if there is a precise qualitative characteristic of the fact itself. At the same time Topolski's formulation cannot be regarded as definitive, as covering the problem with all its numerous facets. Holism, that is, the unity of the object under study, does not alter the situation in which the researcher working with certain data is not capable of exhausting all of their aspects. One and the same object may be approached from various positions and considered from different angles depending on the concrete task the researcher has set himself. For example, the statement that in the Presnya district the revolutionary workers' resistance during the December 1905 Uprising in Moscow was stronger than in other places may be used by different historians in varying degrees depending on their concrete goals.

There is a tendency to complicate the problem of the historical fact unnecessarily. Discussion of its nature and methods of its classification are mostly speculative. The numerous books on this subject do not, as a rule, aim at making concrete historical research easier. Nevertheless a general theoretical formulation of the question seems to be necessary.

The historian's work is a kind of synthesis of the empirical and theoretical approaches to the object of study. The very process of selecting factual data assumes that the historian has not only purely professional qualifications but also a theoretical conception or hypothesis materially affecting the process of selection. The distinction is often drawn between "the historical fact" and "the concept", with

which the historian has to deal. It is not advisable, for example, to confuse a historical fact, such as the prevalence of opportunistic elements in the Second International, and the concept of reformism.

In selecting certain facts from an infinite number of events, the historian already begins their theoretical interpretation and explanation in a real sense. In the course of analysis of data, he rises an ever higher level of their comprehension. As he rises above the empirical level of research, the historian increasingly uses the method of abstraction, that is, the logical method, which reveals the real essence of the historical.

The view is often expressed that a distinction should be made between fact as objective reality and fact as the object of study, "the historical fact". "A scientific fact is not the event as such but its reflection in a specific form".<sup>6</sup> The concept of the so-called historiographic fact, therefore, gained some currency among Marxist historians; it differs from the "ordinary" historical fact in that it is regarded as a necessary component of the historian's research. The Polish historians C. Bobinska and J. Topolski define the historiographic fact as a scientific reconstruction or as a result of the creative processing of facts by the researcher.<sup>7</sup>

Apparently it would be more correct to speak of interpretation rather than of reconstruction of historical facts. It would be wrong to oppose historical facts as a certain reality (objective truth reflected in consciousness) to arbitrary use of the given phenomena in the historian's work.

The area of search for new historical realities would be made unjustifiably narrow if we rejected them as non-historical from the outset simply because they are as yet inaccessible to historiography. History is a continuously developing science, and what was yesterday a "non-fact" may tomorrow prove to be a well-established and generally recognised fact. It is theoretically wrong to regard as actually existing only those phenomena which are reflected in the historian's consciousness. If we accepted this view,

we would involuntarily be moving towards a purely subjectivist approach to the historical process.

Taking all this into account, it appears to be sufficient to view as "historiographic" all those facts which were in some way reflected in historiography (often extremely one-sidedly). One need not apparently construct any other artificial classifications of historical facts.

Any objective reality is a historical fact. It follows that no phenomenon becomes historical simply for the reason that historian A. has noticed, discovered, or described it. One can easily assume that the given fact missed by historian A. will be discovered by historians B. and C. under different external circumstances and at different moments. These external circumstances may undoubtedly affect the chain of proofs adduced by the historian in his study. A situation is also quite possible in which the given fact will in general remain unknown to anyone for a long time. Its existence will inevitably be ignored in historical constructions. It is wrong to declare an undiscovered fact to be non-existent, non-historical. The historian is continually searching for knowledge, and he has practically unlimited possibilities for augmenting the stock of his scientific instruments (in the first place of facts and sources). It would be unjustifiable to restrict his scope of vision to an already established range of facts recognised as historical.

This has no direct bearing on the important question of classification of historical facts and certain hierarchical dependences established between them. Yet the dependence itself appears as a derived magnitude determined by the researcher's methodological position and qualification as well as by the number of new, previously unknown and recently discovered historical facts. It would thus be wrong to "canonise" in any way the historical facts familiar to the scholar as distinct from the as yet unknown ones, which are nevertheless just as real and just as independent of his consciousness.

In emphasising the historian's active role in the cognitive process, Topolski takes issue with Bobinska's criticism of the approach to historical facts as scientific constructions

only. Topolski believes that, as long as the existence of objective reality, independent of the cognising subject, is recognised, the "construction" of historical facts cannot be regarded as subjectivism.

A decisive condition for selecting facts in historical research is mastering the general principles which permit to proceed from the particular to the general on the basis of the conception of recurrent phenomena, the existing historical laws. The historian starts on his work armed with a knowledge of certain factual materials as well as with preliminary ideas about what he can expect from this material and the direction of his research. The objective quality of selecting factual data is fully determined by the historian's general world-view. Selecting facts is a very responsible part of the work of the historian, who uses the entire sum of his knowledge drawn both from the sources and other channels.

The absolute superiority of the materialist conception of history and, consequently, of Marxist historical science lies in its principles of data selection on the basis of the general sociological theory of historical materialism. Both the selection of and the approach to the mass of historical facts by the Marxist historian are not arbitrary at all. He begins his research with studying the concrete circumstances, place and time of the historical event, and with establishing the role it can play in the overall socio-economic development of the given epoch.

The external historical community is invariably represented by a socio-economic formation. It is possible to reveal the essence of the historical fact only if the context of the epoch is properly taken into account, and first and foremost of the formation in which it exists. Only the dialectical-materialist epistemology can ensure the scholar's objectivity in selecting and evaluating historical facts. The data with which the historian deals may prove to be insufficient for drawing convincing conclusions or for substantiating a certain conception, or it may completely refute his initial assumptions. The researcher's duty is in this case to take measures for extending the range of sources and materials or, if this is out of the question, to introduce

the necessary corrections in the working hypothesis. The historian cannot ignore the facts, even if they run counter to his initial conclusions. The partisanship of the Marxist historical science rests on the reliability, authenticity of the facts on which it is based.

But the historian is not passive with regard to the facts that he has collected and verified. His duty is to establish the "hierarchical" position of these facts in the chain of other facts that are already known. That is achieved through their juxtaposition and analysis of their interdependence and mutual influences. Each historical phenomenon must be considered in its development and movement rather than statically. Lenin demanded of the researcher: "Criticism must consist in comparing and contrasting the given fact with another fact and not with an idea; the one thing of moment is that both facts be investigated as accurately as possible, and that they actually form, in respect of each other, different moments of development; but most important of all is that an equally accurate investigation be made of the whole series of known states, their sequence and the relation between the different stages of development".<sup>8</sup> On numerous occasions he insisted that "we must take not individual facts, but the sum total of facts, without a single exception, relating to the question under discussion. Otherwise there will be the inevitable, and fully justified, suspicion that the facts were selected or compiled arbitrarily, that instead of historical phenomena being presented in objective interconnection and interdependence and treated as a whole, we are presenting a 'subjective' concoction to justify".<sup>9</sup>

There exists a reliable Marxist historiographic tradition regarding the historical fact. M. Pokrovsky interpreted explanation of a historical fact as "the establishment of cause-and-effect links between them [the facts]. Until the real links are established, as well as the causes of the origin of the fact and the consequences following from it, it [the fact] is accidental, unexplained, isolated, incomprehensible. And this fact has to be explained historically rather than sociologically, that is, it should be

explained on the basis of the principle of historicism, and the inevitability of its emergence under concrete conditions of place and time should be shown, as well as the facts and events that conditioned its emergence".<sup>10</sup> Pokrovsky ascribed different roles to different facts in historical cognition, emphasising the dependence of a fact on its objective role in the historical process by using special terms: "the basic fact", "the primary fact", "the characteristic fact", etc. The basic or decisive facts included those which reflected the history of economic relations and of class struggle, those which actually determined the essence of major events, expressing the inevitability of these events and processes conditioned by objective laws.<sup>11</sup> Pokrovsky justly assumed that the "crude work" of establishing historical facts, which demands a great expenditure of labour and time, is in itself a complicated methodological process.

Academician Yu. Frantsev stressed this idea: "There is no such science of history that is engaged in merely amassing facts. Just as there is no such science of history which would not rely on the facts but merely repeat the truisms about the logic of the historical process. But what is an appraisal of fact? It implies revealing the actual objective links between certain facts and the tendency of development of historical reality. A scientific approach is inconceivable without linking up facts, either newly discovered or previously known but incorrectly elucidated, with other facts and phenomena, without contrasting them with general tendencies of historical development, in the first place with the course of class struggle".<sup>12</sup>

Some bourgeois historians express the view that the researcher cannot and should not take into account all the facts relating to the subject-matter he has chosen. E. Sestan remarks, for example, that subjectivism dominates both the selection of the subject of study and of the facts for researching the subject. This choice, he states, "is conditioned by the environment and the times in which the historian lives, his views of life in all its aspects and problems--political, economic, social, religious, and mo-

ral".<sup>13</sup> Indeed, the historian's choice is ultimately determined by his socio-political position, but that does not signify either any arbitrariness in selecting the facts or subjective defectiveness of his conclusions. It all depends on the class and methodological views defended by the researcher.

Considerable attention is paid in historical literature to the sequence of processes involved in the study of historical facts. This sequence cannot, of course, be set down as a norm. It largely depends on whether the historian begins his study with an analysis of a given fact or group of facts, or whether he wants to establish their place in a conception of the content of an event or process that was formed on the basis of other sources. In the latter case the historian has previously determined the internal and external regularities operating under the given concrete conditions. He, therefore, can, following the deductive method, proceed from general theoretical premises in analyzing the given fact or some other additional facts.

The founders of scientific communism were unanimous in stating that in any scientific area, natural or historical, the available facts should be the starting point.

It follows that establishing facts is the primary and necessary function of any historical study.

#### NOTES

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- <sup>2</sup> C.L. Becker, "What Are Historical Facts?", Western Political Quarterly, 1955, Vol. VIII, No. 3, pp. 330-331.
- <sup>3</sup> R.G. Collingwood, The Idea of History, Oxford, 1946, pp. 56, 259, 271-281, 305.
- <sup>4</sup> E.H. Carr, What Is History?, London, 1962, pp. 18, 22-24.
- <sup>5</sup> J. Topolski, Metodologia historii, Warsaw, 1976, p. 621.
- <sup>6</sup> A.I. Uvarov, "The Structure of Theory in Historical

Science, Issue 3, 1965, p. 36; see also V.A. Dyakov, The Methodology of History in the Past and Present, Moscow, 1974, p. 109 (both in Russian).

- <sup>7</sup> C. Bobinska, Historyk, fakt, metoda, Warsaw, 1964, pp. 49-50; J. Topolski, op. cit., p. 150.
- <sup>8</sup> V.I. Lenin, Collected Works, Moscow, Vol. 1, pp. 166-167.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid., Vol. 23, pp. 272-273.
- <sup>10</sup> A.A. Govorkov, M.N. Pokrovsky About the Subject-Matter of Historical Science, Tomsk, 1976, pp. 239-240 (in Russian).
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 248.
- <sup>12</sup> History and Sociology, Moscow, 1964, p. 334 (in Russian).
- <sup>13</sup> E. Sestan, The History of Events and the History of Structures, Moscow, 1970, p. 6 (in Russian).



## THE HISTORICAL SOURCE

Any information pertaining to mankind's past may be a historical source. Historical sources being heterogeneous, this requires their classification (written sources, monuments of material culture, etc.).

Most important for historical investigation is, of course, attributive classification, that is the establishment of the correlation between sources and the spatio-temporal complexes under study, rather than a formal classification of historical sources of different types.

The success of historical investigation largely depends on the utilisation of an ensemble of sources providing complementary information and not on the study of one particular kind of sources (archaeological or documentary materials, etc.). The more extensive and varied the sources relating to a definite process or event, the more reliable the researcher's conclusions. Close cooperation is therefore essential between specialists in different historical disciplines, including the so-called auxiliary disciplines, for the solution of diverse problems arising in historical studies. Scientific analysis of sources also requires specialisation of researchers active in various branches of history (archaeology, palaeography, etc.).

Specialisation of individual historical disciplines expanding along with their inner development (increasing

range of materials and methodologies of their study) leads to greater differentiation of historical knowledge and, moreover, results in considerable isolation of its various branches. Along with this process, however, and as a natural reaction to it, there is also an increase in the interdependence between the historical disciplines. At the same time historians more and more extensively use the methods and data of the natural and mathematical sciences. The so-called related disciplines appear. All of this increases the range of scientific instruments that can be applied in historical study. A historian's special professional qualifications sometimes prove inadequate for carrying out a thorough historical analysis. Cooperation with other contiguous and even unrelated sciences is needed.

It is of course difficult to judge the degree of importance of historical sources without taking into account the concrete circumstances. Their significance is entirely determined by the nature of the problem the historian is concerned with.

Here it is important to stress the great diversity of means which the historian has at his disposal for reproducing and evaluating the past. Being an independent branch of historical science, source study generalises these instruments and achieves a synthesis of the diverse data studied by the special auxiliary historical disciplines. The latter include:

- palaeography, studying outward characteristics of ancient written sources;
- sphragistics and heraldry, studying seals and coats of arms;
- diplomats, studying old official documents (acts);
- epigraphics, studying inscriptions (written sources excluded);
- numismatics, studying coins and medals;
- chronology and metrology, studying systems of time measuring, weights and measures;
- archaeography, working out the principles of source publication.

Most sources studied by the auxiliary historical disciplines relate, of course, to remote historical epochs. Historians specialising in the study of the more recent historical periods are in a comparatively better position, for they have much better systematised and complete data at their disposal. And yet they run into just as many objective difficulties in using the historical sources of modern and contemporary times as historians specialising in the history of Antiquity and of the Middle Ages.

Each historical source bears the imprint of the dominant socio-economic relations and their corresponding ideological "load". However rich the archive, statistical, and other data characterising the modern and contemporary times may be, they are no more free of bias than those pertaining to the more remote epochs.

A historical source is a monument of the past reflecting the time and conditions of its creation. In other words, a source is itself a historical phenomenon and can be correctly understood and interpreted only if the vital interests and ideas of its authors are taken into account. "The source, tradition," notes Th. Schieder, "gives preference, as a rule, to the dominant and influential strata: political and social influence is everywhere linked with influence on historical tradition—not only through a tententious impact but also by the very preponderance of written records possessed by the rulers, high-ranking officials, and the strata with a monopoly on education. The behaviour and mentality of the lower classes usually leave no direct written record; they do not appear clearly as a subject either in official papers or in individuals' testimony such as letters and personal records."<sup>1</sup> These words characterise the actual origin of most written sources. Nevertheless, these sources contain a great deal of information, indirect though it may be, throwing light on the non-privileged classes and at times on that of the social lower strata.

In recent years, source study has achieved considerable successes. This is particularly true of Soviet source study. A typical example here is V. Yanin's book Essays in Interdisciplinary Source Study. Mediaeval Novgorod.<sup>2</sup> The progress in

this area is mostly due to the interdisciplinary approach to the sources analysed and to a combination of different methodological procedures. The facts contained in the sources in a mediated form, can only provide the historian with valuable information if he uses the entire range of instruments for making the source "speak".

V. Pashuto evaluates the various aspects of source analysis as follows: "A source may be analysed chronologically (we have in mind a more common case when the formal textological analysis has already been done and we have a good publication available), or vertically, comprehending the dynamics of the text's development: the place of the source in the history of the collection in which it is contained and the place of the collection (or code) as a monument of the socio-economic, political and cultural life, in the struggle for the assertion of a class or group. It is by no means a matter of indifference to us when, where, and in whose social interests the given act was compiled, where a given chronicle came from, and whether it was written as a whole, or forms a code or part of a code (codes). The purpose of the analysis is, therefore, clear—determining the reliability of a source, an item of information or, finally, of a fact. A source may also be analysed territorially, comparatively and historically, which involves juxtaposition of synchronic monuments written in the same or in foreign languages, or different provenance, referring to one and the same event. Here too the main point of departure is defining the political, class and group interests reflected in the monuments of each of the centres compared."<sup>3</sup>

We know that the most ancient written sources which serve as valuable historical sources often contain various superimposed layers, later interpolations and additions in other authors' hand. The article by Yu. Kizilov cites numerous examples of significant ideological divergences between the earlier and the later chroniclers—the authors of the classical Tale of Bygone Years. "The study of the texts of The Tale of Bygone Years", writes Yu. Kizilov, "written by chroniclers of different ages and traditions, shows once again how promising is a more careful study of the historical

thinking of its various authors. Their world-view reveals a significant evolution from pagan to Orthodox Christian forms. The struggle between these religious systems, paganism and Christianity, largely determined the development of the social consciousness of Old Rus, and unless one takes it into account, it is difficult to conceive even in general outline the evolution of the historical ideas of the Old Russian chroniclers."<sup>4</sup>

Real life is always richer than its reflection in any document. In his Letters, Bolingbroke writes, not without acrimony, about near-contemporary events: "You will want no materials to form true notions of transactions so recent. Even pamphlets, wrote on different sides and on different occasions in our party disputes, and histories of no more authority than pamphlets, will help you to come at truth. Read them with suspicion, my lord, for they deserve to be suspected: pay no regard to the epithets given, nor to the judgements passed; neglect all declamation, weigh the reasoning and advert to fact."<sup>5</sup>

The same thing is evident from the minutes of the sittings of large and small collectives--an important source on the history of revolutionary movement and social transformation, briefly recording the decisions taken. These documents are as a rule deposited in the archives, and historians willingly refer to them. Archive sources are traditionally regarded as the most authoritative and reliable. Every living witness and participant of some concrete sitting may confirm however that the final record does not give a real idea of the work preceding the briefly formulated decision. The debate in the sitting, the concrete arguments which ultimately determine the final outcome leave as a rule only a very dry and scant trace in the archive records. The historian has to find additional means for reconstructing the circumstances which determined the decision. These may include such more or less objective data as statistical materials as well as subjective proofs (private letters, memoirs of the participants in the decision-making, etc.).

The historian's training (general theoretical and professional) is a necessary condition for his research. In

other words, a historian cannot extract the necessary information from a source unless he has certain qualifications for that.

J. Topolsky suggests the following order in the historian's research: (1) The choice of study area. (2) Formulation of the problem. (3) Finding out the sources for the study of the problem. (4) Interpreting the information obtained from the sources. (5) The study of authenticity (external critique). (6) The study of reliability (internal critique). (7) Establishing facts about which there is direct information in the sources. (8) Establishing facts about which there is no direct information in the sources (along with verification). (9) The ascertainment of causal relations (along with verification). (10) The ascertainment of laws (along with verification). (11) Synthetic interpretation (the answer to the researcher's question). (12) Adequate evaluation of historical facts.

J. Topolsky points out that of the research operations indicated, only three (5, 6 and 7) are based on knowledge directly obtained from the sources. The rest are based on knowledge obtained outside the sources. Nevertheless, knowledge obtained from the sources plays the greatest role in establishing facts. "We establish facts on the basis of sources, although it is easy to see that we could not have obtained relative information from the source without knowledge from outside the source."<sup>6</sup>

A critical attitude of the historian to the source and the need for its repeated verification presuppose a clear understanding of the fact that the source is always a more or less distorted reflection of objective reality. Dialectical connections between the objective and the subjective are manifested in the following two aspects of cognition: first, the source itself appears as the subjective element with regard to the objective one which it reflects; second, the historian working with this source stands in relation to it--subject to object. The historian's cognitive work assumes a profound creative process revealing the dialectics of the interrelation between the objective and the subjective.

In using documentary sources, the researcher is almost always in a position to verify again and again the reliability of the information contained in them by comparing various documents pertaining to the given subject. However, a critical attitude to written sources should not develop into hypercriticism.

Source critique is usually divided under the headings of external and internal. By external critique of a source is meant its deciphering and ascertaining its authenticity. Here the historian often resorts to the methods of auxiliary historical disciplines, such as epigraphics, textology, and palaeography. Of considerable importance is also a linguistic analysis of the source which helps to establish its origin, age, and the nature of the social milieu in which it could be created. Inner critique of a source demands that its origin, primarily its social orientation, and the degree of reliability of the information contained in it be established.

It is difficult and hardly expedient to divide the critique of a source into external and internal even with regard to the order of operations. Deciphering the source and defining its orientation are very closely interrelated and, as a rule, simultaneous processes.

The possibility of historical process experimentation, mental as well as real, with the aim of verification and partial correction of data contained in the sources, cannot be rejected out of hand. N. Erofeyev cites several examples of experiments in the sphere of historical science. In particular, he mentions Thor Heyerdahl's "Kon-Tiki" and "Ra" voyages as well as that by the American S. Morrison who, in 1939-1940, followed the route of Columbus. Using Columbus' log, Morrison reached the Western Hemisphere and verified the degree of precision of the notes and observations made by Columbus.<sup>7</sup>

The study of historical sources has as its first task revealing the intentions and the mood of their authors. In this case the subjective feature that is invisibly present in every source itself becomes a most important object of

study. "The historian's task is the division of the information contained in the source into two parts: the objective reflection of the historical situation and its interpretation by the source's author covering the class position, the motives for the creation of the source, its completeness, reliability, distortions, suppressions, etc."<sup>8</sup>

M. Barg notes that every time the researcher has to overcome the barrier of "realities transformation" to grasp the essence of things hidden behind their appearance. "In its turn, appearance also has two forms: (1) objective, when the relations are reversed by the course of the process and assume fantastic form, (2) subjective, when social relations, phenomena, and events are perceived as reversed."<sup>9</sup>

Bourgeois historiography mostly takes up subjectivist positions in evaluating the role of sources. In the view of some authors, the significance of a source is wholly determined by the historian's intellect and his ability to use the information contained in it (e.g., Marrou<sup>10</sup>). The historian's qualification and training, indeed, either increase or reduce his ability to use the historical source fully and rationally. But evaluation of the objective significance of a source should not be made dependent on its individual perception.

Recently, some historians abroad have completely rejected reliance on sources in establishing historical facts. Sceptics insist that even after the preliminary very painstaking work of establishing the authenticity, substantiation of dating a source, and so on, its value remains extremely problematic, for it allegedly separates the historian and the historical fact.

There are, of course, no compilers of written documents who would be absolutely impartial with regard to its content. This weakens, to some extent, the objective quality of the data cited in the source. But that does not mean that the source itself is worthless; it means merely additional research work for the historian.<sup>11</sup> Some bourgeois historians (for instance, E. Tapp) go so far as to insist, absurdly,

that the source in general pertains to the sphere of thinking, having no existence outside men's imagination.<sup>12</sup>

Recently, special interest has been displayed in a specific form of the historical source--the so-called oral history. The term means the use of oral testimony of participants of historical events that are not recorded in documents. However, due to the wide use of stenography and sound-recording, the data of oral history are, as a rule, transformed into a variety of documentary sources.

Oral history is of particular importance for the peoples that have no written language of their own. Data concerning the historical past of these peoples are often contained in legends transmitted from generation to generation by word of mouth. D.P. Heninge, the British specialist on African traditional societies, is rather sceptical about the importance of oral legends as a historical source. Traditional tales were intended for singling out and rendering the aspects of the past which were considered important for the present. That presupposes an attempt to attribute a form of continuity (as a rule, within the life-span of more than three generations) to orally recounted events. Therefore, as Heninge points out, folk poetry, heroic legends, fairy tales and other forms of folk oral tradition are excluded from the study as they bear no reference to either continuity or sequence of events.<sup>13</sup>

B. Grekov and B. Rybakov hold an opposite view. B. Rybakov's fundamental study Old Rus. Fairy-Tales, Bylinas, Chronicles consistently expounds the idea that bylinas as a type of oral sources always reflect actual historical events that took place in the remote past. He has made an interesting attempt at comparing the protagonists of the Russian bylinas with the persons that actually existed in history and, moreover, at synchronising the events described in them.

In his critique of the view that the content of bylinas as folklore epics is based on artistic invention, Rybakov relies on Grekov's studies. He writes: "One of the trends follows Grekov's correct thesis: 'A bylina is history re-

counted by the people itself'. This trend, now headed by the historian and literary critic D. Likhachov, takes pains to keep alive the historical approach to the epos; it can also be referred to as the Soviet historical school."<sup>14</sup>

The study of oral history is of importance not only for the peoples who have no written language of their own. It should be borne in mind that almost in all the countries of the world many original written sources on history were, for various reasons, lost. There has always been the possibility of the content of these no longer existing sources being retained in the form of oral legends, although this possibility calls for a very critical attitude on the part of researchers.

The search for new, earlier unknown sources extending our knowledge of the past is going on.

#### NOTES

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- <sup>3</sup> The Methods of Studying the Most Ancient Sources on the History of the Peoples of the USSR, ed. by V.T. Pashuto, Moscow, 1978, p. 3 (in Russian).
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- <sup>13</sup> D.P. Heninge, The Chronology of Oral Tradition, Oxford, 1974, p. 2.
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CONCLUSION  
HISTORY AND OUR TIMES

Never before has historical science--or, incidentally, all the other social sciences--gained such serious significance for our times and for the progress of mankind as it has today in the countries where the advanced and revolutionary Marxist-Leninist worldview has triumphed and become completely dominant. Historical knowledge is also acquiring ever greater practical significance, which, of course, in no way means that it has become subordinated to vulgar utilitarianism. In the countries of socialism, a scientific understanding of mankind's vast historical experience is essential, not only to substantiate and consolidate the dialectico-materialistic worldview, and inculcate socialist patriotism and internationalism, but also to be instrumental in the construction of a new, communist society. The study of many ideas which have become part of history, an analysis of past attempts to implement such ideas, and the ascertainment of the concrete causes for the success or failure of many initiatives of the past--all these provide material of the greatest interest and value. The rich heritage of the past can and should be fully used to extract the objective lessons of history which are of great importance for the construction of communism.

Lenin often emphasised the value of the lessons of history to our times and the future: "We must ... sum them up, draw conclusions, draw from the experience of today's happenings lessons that will be useful tomorrow."<sup>1</sup> It was necessary, he wrote, "to write the history of the present day" and "to write it in such a way as to promote the spread of the movement, the conscious selection of the means, ways, and methods of struggle that, with the least expenditure of effort, will yield the most substantial and permanent results".<sup>2</sup> For that, two fundamental conditions have to be met: in the first place, history should be an objective science reflecting the views of the advanced class in present-day society, and, second, there must be a desire and readiness on the part of citizens to learn the lessons of history and make use of them in concrete social practice.

Of the utmost importance are those lessons of history which link together historical processes and phenomena that are closest to us in terms of time or are still under way. The study of present-day history provides answers to many questions posed by life itself, thereby greatly enhancing the practical value of history as a science.

The present should not be contraposed to the past, for the events of today stem from those of yesterday, the current course of social development cannot be understood or correctly appraised without a knowledge of its sources. Historical studies have borne out that the past--even if far removed from us--can reveal the roots or beginnings of processes that have received their fullest expression in our times.

Consequently, the concept of "the present" in respect of historical science cannot be reduced exclusively to a matter of chronology. Parallel with the study of historical processes and events that mark our times, historical science analyses those phenomena and processes which arose in the past but are still under way or are exerting a direct influence on our days. At the same time, it pays attention to everything that holds out a promise of further development

and thus enables us in certain measure to foresee the morrow.

The borderline between the past and the present is highly relative. Marx and Lenin gave classical examples of a rigorously scientific analysis of contemporary events, thereby laying bare their genuine historical significance. Almost all the writings of the classics of Marxism bear the imprint of profound historicism, show that dialectics includes historicism, and while dealing with the then contemporary processes and events serve as models of a profound cognition of reality with a direct bearing on practice. A vivid example of such historical writings is provided by Karl Marx's The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte and especially his The Civil War in France, in which a profound analysis of the events of those days proved necessary to Marx for practical conclusions in the revolutionary struggle.

The further development of Marxist historical science and all its achievements since the end of the 19th century are indissolubly bound up with the activities of Lenin. The study of the current epoch would be practically impossible without his fundamental works on imperialism, the history of the Russian and the world revolutionary movement, the history of the Communist Party, and on concrete questions of socialist construction. Lenin's theory of the socialist revolution laid the groundwork for research into the basic processes and patterns of the historical epoch of the transition from capitalism to socialism. Sixty odd years of experience have borne out the correctness of Lenin's theory.

Lenin's development of materialist dialectics consolidated the methodological foundations for an insight into the roads of mankind's progressive advance. Many propositions of Marxism as formulated or only sketched out in the writings of the founders of scientific communism were elaborated in detail by Lenin, with due account of new data and a new historical situation, which called, not only for a specification but also for an enrichment of their

theoretical views. Lenin elaborated in detail the question of the vanguard role of the working class in the development of society, the role of the Party, proletarian dictatorship, the relation between objective and subjective factors in the revolutionary process, and the state. Of exceptional importance is his theoretical formulation of the highly complex national question.

Lenin's writings on the history of Russia provide a model of concrete scientific analysis grounded in a profound penetration into the essence of socio-economic phenomena and gigantic factual material, including statistics.

Lenin was not a professional historian; he usually referred to himself as a publicist. Thus, he titled his theoretical work on imperialism very modestly as a "booklet". Disregarding all other variegated aspects of the activities of Lenin's genius, it should nevertheless be said that he was an historian in the fullest and broadest sense of the word, but was first and foremost a great revolutionary. His historical studies were always purposeful: he sought in the past replies to many questions of the day as raised by life. The study of history was never an end in itself for Lenin, for it was necessary to him to achieve a better understanding of his own times, and a correct scientific appraisal of processes that were under way or were reappearing and would enter the future. His publicist writings bearing, in particular, on the period during which the socialist revolution was being prepared between March and October 1917 and published day by day in the Party press in the immediate wake of the political events were a model of a full blend of history, revolutionary theory and practice. The logic in such an approach is self-evident. The principle of historicism, of an appraisal of social phenomena in their dynamic development, is integral in Marxism-Leninism.

Lenin made constant use of the principle of historicism to reveal the bankruptcy of metaphysical concepts brought forward by the enemies of Marxism. Lenin's historicism, like

that of Marx, was intensely revolutionary, this being directly linked with the Marxist-Leninist doctrine as a world-view of the most advanced and world-transforming social forces, which look fearlessly into the future and are therefore capable of objectively appraising the past and the present, and of seeing the promise of the future in the past, of understanding the historically transient nature of the antagonistic social relations.

In addressing himself even to the most distant historical subjects, he invariably found, in events of the past, links with our own times, those permitting a comprehensive understanding of the objective historical process and the present time.

Highly characteristic was his profound penetration into the motivations and motive forces in the mass movements of the past. He called for a thorough analysis of their strong and weak aspects and the causes of their successes and reverses. Lenin had the greatest respect for revolutionaries whose activities were in keeping with the objective demands of their own times and promoted social progress, even if they often ended in failure and led up to tragic consequences. In his analysis of the experience of the Paris Commune of 1871, Lenin followed Marx in denoting the causes of its defeat and its errors. The objective historical conditions, both external and internal, which developed in France in the second half of the 19th century did not favour the establishment of working-class rule. Marx had warned that the actions of the Communards were premature, which did not prevent him from giving the most energetic support to the cause of the Paris Commune and popularising it. In exactly the same way, Lenin voiced his admiration of the heroism of the Communards, and recognised the tremendous historic significance of the first attempt in history to establish a proletarian dictatorship.

In Lenin's writings the theme of the Paris Commune is almost invariably associated or compared with the Soviet experience of proletarian dictatorship. Thus, for example,



in his speech to the Third Congress of Soviets in January 1918, Lenin called the Paris Commune "the embryo of Soviet power". He went on to say that, unlike the dictatorship of the working class in Russia, which enjoyed the support of millions of the peasantry, "the first experience of workers' government" in France was not understood by the vast majority of the French peasantry. Besides, the Communards did not create a machinery of state, as was done by the victorious proletariat of Russia. That was why the Paris workers, who held out for two months and ten days, "perished at the hands of the French Cadets, Mensheviks and Right Socialist-Revolutionaries of a Kaledin type".<sup>3</sup>

He often drew upon the experience of the past, yet there was no more resolute enemy of all and every doubtful and arbitrary historical analogies than he was. He ridiculed the anti-historism of those politicians or authors who artificially brought together externally similar social phenomena, which they examined outside the framework of time and space. To him, as a genuine scholar, the main thing in the sphere of historical science as well was the ascertainment of the inner objective patterns of social development, which only make it possible not only to understand but also to foresee the further direction of society's advance.

Thus, the past and the present were not and could not be divorced from each other in Lenin's perception. On the contrary, they were inseparable: in an overall sense, the present is a continuation of an unbroken historical process; in the particular sense, a knowledge of history and its laws facilitates a conscious control of society's present-day movement.

Also of everlasting significance in historical cognition is Lenin's acute struggle both against vulgar sociology and spineless empiricism. It enables Marxist historical science to more effectually expose the present-day falsifiers of history; it helps unmask the latest and "modish" revisionist theories, which, on the pretext of national

specifics or else under the false flag of a struggle against dogmatism dictated by a false concern for the replacement of allegedly outmoded propositions of Marxism, have tried to drum in bourgeois ideology by the back door. The present-day attacks waged by the anti-communist forces against the Marxist-Leninist theory of the working class, the dictatorship of the proletariat, genuine, i.e., socialist, democracy, and socialist internationalism show what a sharp ideological weapon that theory is in the hands of the world's working class, and how interested the world's reactionaries are in dulling the edge of that weapon and eliminating it from the revolutionary arsenal.

In themselves, Lenin's revolutionary activities comprise a most important chapter in world history. At the same time, Lenin's manyfaceted work is exerting a direct and, it may well be said, ever growing impact on our times, on all world development. His struggle against the enemies of Marxism, the opportunists of the right and the "left", against the Mensheviks and the Trotskyites, the Bundists and other nationalists, a struggle over the fundamental questions of the theory and practice of the revolutionary movement belong both to history and to our times. Suffice it to recall the permanent value to our times of Lenin's criticism of the liberal-philistine understanding of democracy or an absolutisation of the nationally specific and the nationally particular to the detriment of what is fundamental and overall in the revolutionary movement and historical development. As Lenin pointed out, "General talk about freedom, equality and democracy is in fact but a blind repetition of concepts shaped by the relations of commodity production. To attempt to solve the concrete problems of the dictatorship of the proletariat by such generalities is tantamount to accepting the theories and principles of the bourgeoisie in their entirety."<sup>4</sup>

The present-day inventors of prescriptions for the ideological "erosion" of socialism devote special attention to galvanising the petty-bourgeois understanding of democracy and to an apologia and fetishisation of the

attributes of formal, bourgeois democracy. The revisionist practice of today has many things in common with the old Kautskian attacks against the dictatorship of the working class, and against the very foundations of the Marxist-Leninist doctrine.

Today too, the question of classes and the class approach to an appraisal of social phenomena is focal in the ideological struggle. The decades since the death of Lenin have shown that the enemies of Marxism-Leninism are tenaciously attacking the theory of classes and the class struggle. In the conditions of the scientific and technological revolution, especially fierce and "massive" attempts are being made to present particular structural changes in the working class linked with internal shifts in its ranks as the complete disappearance of class distinctions in capitalist society. The bourgeoisie are aware that the revolutionary working class is their main and fully consistent enemy. No other revolutionary forces can replace the working class either in carrying out the socialist revolution or--the more so--in the construction of socialism.

Already towards the end of the last century the first manifestations of revisionism in the socialist movement were linked with a striving to play down the class contradictions between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, spread the illusion of the possibility of "class peace", and undermine faith in the feasibility of socialist ideals. Special efforts were made to inculcate the idea of a non-class or supra-class nature of the state. It is not fortuitous that today's revisionist, reformist and bourgeois-nationalist elements are grossly slandering the Soviet Union and the other socialist states in an attempt to belittle or refute the leading role of the working class in those countries, and detract from their significance as the main force in historical development. Professors of the ultra-left assert that the proletariat has become completely bourgeoisified and is no longer an active revolutionary force. The ideologists of capitalism speak of the "deideologisation" of present-day society in their

attempts to gloss over the special role of the working class in the revolutionary transformation of the world. An absolutisation of the revolutionary role of the peasantry is characteristic of Maoist and pro-Maoist ideologists.

Lenin conducted a resolute, energetic and ardent struggle against all kinds of nationalism. "One who has adopted the standpoint of nationalism naturally arrives at the desire to erect a Chinese Wall around his nationality, his national working-class movement; he is unembarrassed... even by the fact that by his tactics of division and dismemberment he is reducing to nil the great call for the rallying and unity of the proletarians of all nations, all races and all languages."<sup>5</sup> This proposition of Lenin's has been borne out by the experience of the class struggle at the present stage. The efforts made by the Maoists and other nationalist stooges of imperialism are directed towards undermining the unity of all progressive revolutionary forces. In the strategy of anti-communism, special prominence is given to attempts to split up the socialist countries, and contrapose them to one another through the use of nationalist slogans.

Magnified nationalism under the guise of a defence of local national interests is directed against the world socialist system as a whole, i.e., is ultimately directed towards weakening the main revolutionary force of our times. Of special topicality today is Lenin's call for a fight "against small-nation narrow-mindedness, seclusion and isolation", and a consideration of "the whole and the general" and subordination of "the particular to the general interest".<sup>6</sup>

A rejection of the class and Marxist appraisal of phenomena in social life, of facts, actions, programmes and slogans advanced by political organisations and the activities of their leaders cannot but lead into the embraces of the reactionary bourgeoisie. Whatever camouflaged formulas are invented by renegades from communism and by the

revisionists, who speak of various models of socialism (now "humanistic", now nationalistically hued) there exists in the world of today a clash only between two world-outlooks, two ideologies: the socialist and the bourgeois. The numerous theories or points of view which satisfy the individualistic pride of bourgeois professors or petty-bourgeois politicians are sheer fiction in the sense that they all are reducible in fact to a rejection of a distinctly proletarian, i.e., genuinely scientific, Leninist approach to social processes and phenomena.

Many historical writings by the classics of scientific communism have dispelled the prejudice still existent in certain places, according to which the historian should not engage in serious research into events that are contemporary. Here reference is made to a lack of objective sources, the unaccomplished nature of current processes, and the like.

Of course, the study of contemporary history is linked with a number of difficulties: the historian who breaks new soil cannot ground himself in any historiographic tradition, since it is often non-existent. The historian has to take into account both the insufficiency or the one-sidedness of the available material, this enhancing his responsibility for the conclusions he has arrived at.

In V. Ivanov's opinion, "a knowledge of our times does, and at the same time does not, coincide with a knowledge of history. These coincide, inasmuch as a knowledge of our times is a definite link in one's objective knowledge of social reality as a whole. However, a knowledge of our times also includes a new volume of knowledge reflecting the new and hitherto non-existent, specific features of present-day social phenomena (naturally, a knowledge of previously existent aspects also changes, in keeping with the present-day level of scientific knowledge). In this sense, a knowledge of our times does not, of course, coincide with the knowledge of history, this testifying to the dialectical nature of the unity of history and the present day."<sup>7</sup>

It should be noted that a study of any historical period, and not only the contemporary, calls for a new volume of knowledge, new facts regarding previously non-existent specific features of social phenomena and the like. Of course, one cannot deny a certain specific nature of research work on the part of the historian of the present time but similar requirements exist for the historian of antiquity, the historian of feudalism and the like.

It is undeniable, however, that the advantages of a study of present-day historical processes cannot but be recognised. These lie in the historian's field of vision and he senses the pulse of life in contemporary society. If he has taken up a firm stand on the class and Party positions of the progressive social forces, he is able, as a participant in the events, to establish their objective interlinks, study the motive forces and ascertain the main trend in social development.

Of considerable importance is the question of the topicality of historical research. "The problem of topicality in science," said Boris Ponomarev at the All-Union Conference of Historians in 1962, "is not only one of a choice of themes but one of the levels of their elaboration, the problem of the significance to our times of the conclusions drawn in research."<sup>8</sup>

Elaboration of the theoretical and methodological problems of history on the basis of any concrete material, including the archaic, is undoubtedly topical, inasmuch as it consolidates the foundations of the materialist world-view.

The historian should not lose sight of the unbreakable link between the past and the present. Marx made the following very profound remark: "What is called historical evolution depends in general on the fact that the later form regards earlier ones as stages in the development of itself."<sup>9</sup> This in no way means a sterile evolutionism in the historical process. It is a question of society's determinative advance, in which there is an enhanced possi-

bility for an objective appraisal of the past from the positions of today. Substantiation of the materialist view of history of antiquity or feudal society—this in a struggle against various brands of falsifiers—is topical, since it promotes the onslaught against the ideological positions of present-day anti-communism. Consequently, the topicality of historical research is not confined to an elaboration of present-day problems, to a study of questions of recent history. Themes pertaining to the distant past can be topical, for example such that are linked with the restoration of the genuine history of a number of African peoples, particularly those whom the racists and the colonialists have falsely called non-historical peoples that have allegedly acquired culture only as a result of European conquest.

Soviet historians, who have shown the complete bankruptcy of such views have devoted a great deal of attention in recent years to a study of turning points in the history of mankind as marked by the revolutionary transition from one socio-economic system to another. Such research is not only of a general methodological significance. As a result of the disintegration of the colonial system of imperialism, political independence has been won by a large number of countries in Asia and especially in Africa. Pre-capitalist relations are predominant in many of these countries, while some of them are going through the very initial period of class formation. In dealing with the question of possible roads of struggle for social progress by the peoples in the developing countries, it is most advisable to address oneself to the experience of history and, first and foremost, to the experience of the construction of socialism in the USSR.

The rich heritage of the past can and should be mobilised and used in the interests of the construction of communism only given the condition that it is conducted by historians who are equipped with the Marxist-Leninist methodology and stand firmly on the principles of communist partisanship, i.e., are capable of extracting from

the material available "lessons of history" that are really objective. The world-view significance of historical science, which is exceptionally high, makes it important both for the historical research referring to modern and recent times and to those that go back to the most distant historical past.

Today, social elements sometimes appear on the political arena, whose emergence or activity cannot be attributed exclusively to current historical processes. An understanding of such phenomena calls for attention to be paid to the past. This is most distinctly to be seen in examples of the vitality of certain forms of ideology or the re-emergence of slogans which might seem engendered by historical conditions belonging to the past. Alongside the basic socio-class causes, a certain role also belongs to religious distinctions. All this is indicative of the close links between the present and the past and bears out the continuity of the historical process, giving great topicality to such excursions into the distant past which help us understand the events of today and sometimes foresee their further development. "In essence, it will be no mistake to say that the degree of the impact of historical science, its status and prestige in society, depend considerably on the place our times hold in its range of problems and on the measure in which they are efficaciously elaborated," writes B. Mogilnitsky. "Only the very concept of contemporaneity should not be vulgarised. It has long been known that one can write in modern terms about the most distant past and yet fail to do so in respect of our own times. Historical works can be up-to-date in the genuine meaning of the term, which, besides being based on advanced methods of research, are imbued with ideas that are progressive for their times and at the same time serve to further substantiate their development as well, thereby promoting the accomplishment of tasks confronting society."<sup>10</sup>

The ideological struggle in historical science is often waged, not over present-day material but over problems of

the interpretation of the distant past. It is not fortuitous that bourgeois authors opposed to Marxism are constantly attacking the theory of socio-economic formations, an attempt to prove that the division of history according to the social-formation yardstick is inapplicable to pre-capitalist times. They are out to eliminate the constructive and essential elements from the single edifice of Marxist theory, in a hope to weaken it. But the materialist understanding of history is an integral world-view, which cannot be arbitrarily whittled down to any regional or temporal framework. The Marxist appraisal of the course and patterns of the historical process is grounded in the totality of historical data, from ancient times down to our days. History should be equally effective and prestigious in an analysis of all historical periods without exception, all stages in the development of society.

"The history of Soviet science, and our state interests," Boris Ponomarev writes, "call for a study in our country of all the most important problems of world history and the working out of scientifically grounded viewpoints on these problems ... It is high time for us to set ourselves the task of having, in all areas of historical knowledge, scholars of a standing that will set the tone in world science, whose opinions will be authoritative to all experts in this field."<sup>11</sup>

\* \* \*

Thus, the tasks confronting historical science today, and consequently the historians, are constantly becoming more complex. History is among those social disciplines which cannot but stand in the forefront of the ideological struggle. It is not so much a question of a concrete interpretation of historical events closely linked with our times but of an understanding of the complex mechanism of social development, the recognition or non-recognition of the objective nature of social processes pertaining both to our times and to the most distant past. However, the

ideological function of the science of mankind's past is not limited to such things. Writings on history bring people a knowledge of how present-day society has come into being. This obligates historians to participate in teaching and other educative activities, and spread progressive ideas, drawing upon convincing arguments from all the rich and varied concrete historical experience at our disposal. Marxist-Leninist historical science is equipped with the advanced world-view and method, this making for the extensive mobilisation and propaganda of the finest revolutionary, patriotic and internationalist traditions.

The historian's specialisation in any particular period should not and cannot be an obstacle to his participation in active ideological work. There are many examples of processes and phenomena which would seem to stand on the sidelines of the present ideological struggle, becoming objects of the confrontation between Marxist and non-Marxist historiography. This is best seen from the numerous attempts being made to falsify, in a nationalistic spirit, historical data and materials referring to the distant past, attempts allegedly designed to "substantiate" the priority or even superiority of some particular nation. It may be said that there is no concrete area, even among the ancillary historical disciplines, that can stand quite neutral in these questions.

In recent years, historians have become ever more prone to specialise in ever more narrow fields. There have arisen entire departments in historical science which are susceptible not only to "self-determination" but even to a certain autonomy. It has become the practice for international congresses and conferences to involve experts on certain definite and sometimes very narrow departments of history. Of course, there is nothing unnatural in this, inasmuch as such practice reflects the objective development of knowledge.

At the same time, certain negative features can be seen in a certain departmentalisation of historians. In particular, one should note the growing trend among certain Western scholars to "split up" historical science not only

on a narrowly professional basis. This can be seen from international congresses on economic history, whose deliberations reveal a sufficiently obvious intention on the part of bourgeois historiographers to "specialise" economic history in such a way as to "liberate" it from acute problems connected with the replacement of some socio-economic formations by others, the history of social antagonisms, and other essential factors, without due account of which no genuine economic history can exist.

The objective development of historical science is also linked with integrational processes. The ever greater complexity of objects of concrete research calls for constant cooperation between historians in different fields, whose joint efforts, given a specialised approach to various aspects of the object under study, should give its allround and fully objective characteristic. Many successful attempts have been made in Soviet historical science to synthesise data from various historical disciplines, for instance, history, archaeology, ethnography and Oriental studies, so as to accomplish the task of summing up the rich existent material as rapidly and fully as possible.

The dialectic of differentiation and integration in the area of a knowledge of the past presents certain enhanced demands also to historians themselves. With all the importance and necessity of specialisation, the Marxist historian cannot fully confine himself to a range of his specific and narrowly professional interests.

There can be a single reply to the question of the relation between history and our time: Marxist historical science, which is steadily consolidating its international positions cannot but go with the times, cannot but stand at the level of topical tasks. Such tasks are determined, first and foremost, by the historic significance of the vast process of the establishment of a communist socio-economic formation, which is ushering a new and great era in mankind's progressive development.

# NOTES

- 1 V.I. Lenin, Collected Works, Moscow, Vol. 8, p. 104.
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